

THE ROAD TO CHARTLEY

Ghosts, Legends and Stories of the A518



Part 2

CHARTLEY TO WESTON

Jim Foley

FOREWORD

In The Road to Chartley, Part 1, our journey stopped at Chartley Bank so in the second part our journey resumes from that point. Once again because of the number of personal memories I recorded and the volume of information I received I have had to rethink how best to continue with the story of the Stafford – Uttoxeter Road. In the end with reluctance I have decided to finish this second part of the story at the junction of the A518 with the A51 just before Weston on Trent.

Therefore the third part of The Road to Chartley will now take in the personal stories of people from Gayton and Weston, stories about Weston Hall, Weston Quarry, Tinkerborough, the history of the Battle of Hopton and any other anecdotal information from people along the road into Stafford.

I have to apologise to all those people who have been so eagerly awaiting the second part of The Road to Chartley. Although I have always been keen to finish the book, the demands of modern day work relentlessly increase, meaning I have less and less energy to spend on leisure activities. Nevertheless, I have to say that the book is for me a labour of love.

You will notice that several stories appear in the old style typewriter print. These were done in the days before I had a computer and rather than cause further delay by retyping them I have left them in.

At a later date I intend to publish a more detailed book on Chartley with sections on Mary Queen of Scots who was imprisoned at Chartley Hall in 1585 and the Earls of Essex and Chartley, Lords of the Manor of Chartley.

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Jim Foley Autumn 2001 (Re-printed Spring 2004.)

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STOP PRESS

Just as the book was going to print I discovered that descendants of the Chartley Wild Cattle were re-introduced to Chartley in 1993 after an absence of eighty six years. The Johnsons of Chartley Hall bought two cows from Lord Ferrers and a bull from Laurence Aldercorn and these have successfully bred. Although crossed with other wild breeds over the years the Chartley strain is so strong that the offspring revert to the original Chartley Wild Cattle type.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries Chartley Castle with its large estate, and later Chartley Hall, played a vital role in the local economy. Local people from the surrounding farms, hamlets and villages depended on the owners of the estate for their livelihoods. There were tenant farmers with their farm labourers, there were estate workers such as stewards, woodsmen, game keepers, herd keepers, groomsmen, saddlers, farriers, carriage drivers, domestic staff and labourers and then there were secondary businesses like the inns and shops which grew up around the estate. It was to be many centuries before ordinary people owned their own homes. The workers were totally dependant on the lord of the manor of Chartley and that in most cases brought loyalty and respect. The Ferrers family and their descendants were the owners of Chartley for centuries and their name will always be linked with the area. The family is still remembered for its contribution to local life. One of the Earl Ferrers was a benefactor of Stowe by Chartley school for the children of the workers on his estate. That link came to an end in 1904 when Chartley Estate was broken up and sold and the Ferrers family left the area for good.

We'll start with a brief look at Chartley over the centuries, its owners, the herd of ancient wild cattle that roamed the estate and that will be followed by the stories of people who worked on Chartley Estate or whose parents and grandparents worked there. We'll then continue our journey along the A518.



FERRERS



Arms: Paly of six or and az. a quarter ermine. **Crest:** A Saracen's head in profile, couped ppr., wreathed about the temples or and az.
Supporters: Dexter, a talbot erm., eared gu. and ducally gorged or; sinister, a reindeer gu., billettée and charged on the shoulder with a horse-shoe arg., attired and ducally gorged or. **Motto:** *Honor virtutis premium* ('Honour is the reward of virtue'). **Creation:** Bt. (E) 22 May 1611; V. and E. (GB) 3 Sept 1711.

CHARTLEY

Before the Norman invasion of 1066 there was a Saxon village or township called Certelie presumably somewhere near to where the ruins of Chartley Castle are to-day. The villagers or villeins would have been in feudal bondage to the Saxon or English Earl Algar. We know this because of the survey carried out on the orders of William the Conqueror in 1086. His agents or commissioners surveyed the entire country to ensure that there was a complete record of the manors he and his Norman knights had won. The completed survey, known as the Domesday Book, was completed in 1087. Such was the fear of the early English of William's survey that it was called the Domesday Book because it reminded them of the Last Judgement before God when every single act or thought would have to be accounted for. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded: "He (William) sent his men all over England into every shire and had them find out how many hundred hides there were in the shire, or what land and cattle the king himself had in the country, or what dues he ought to have in twelve months from the shire. Also he had a record made of how much land the archbishops had, and his bishops and abbots and his earls, and what or how much everybody had who was occupying land in England, in land or cattle, and how much money it was worth. So very narrowly (closely) did he have it investigated, that there was no single hide nor a yard of land, nor indeed (it is a shame to relate but it seemed no shame to him to do) one ox nor one pig which was there left out, and put down in his record: and all these records were brought to him afterwards."

One of William's commissioners who carried out the survey in 1086 was Henry de Ferrers, Earl of Derby. Forty six years

later in 1232 one of his descendants, William de Ferrers, acquired Chartley Castle and estate through marriage. The name Ferrers has been associated with Chartley and the surrounding area ever since.

The Domesday Book records that there were nine villagers in Certelie and between them they had one hide of land and two ploughs. One hide was a Saxon measurement of between sixty and one hundred and twenty acres which could be ploughed by eight oxen. There were also six smallholders with eight and half ploughs. There were ten acres of meadow and woods measuring one league by half a league. In 1066 Certelie had belonged to the Saxon Earl Algar and was valued at 100s. In 1187 it belonged to King William and was valued at 110s. There is no mention of a castle or church at Chartley and strangely there is no mention of Stowe by Chartley in the Domesday Book. At some time the village of Chartley disappeared and the village of Stowe made its appearance.

The ruins of Chartley Castle stand on a hill above the A518 an half way between Stafford and Uttoxeter just seven miles from each. It was built in about 1220 by Ranulph de Blundeville, 7th Earl of Chester, possibly on an existing wood and earth Saxon fortification. Ranulph who had become wealthy with war booty he had gained during the Crusades was also responsible for the building of Beeston Castle, Cheshire, Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire and Dieulacre Abbey near Leek.

When Ranulph died without issue in 1232 Chartley Castle passed to his sister Alice whose husband William de Ferrers, 4th Earl of Derby, mentioned earlier, already owned over 200 manors in Staffordshire and Derbyshire. The repeal of the harsh Forest Law in 1217 had led to an increase in hunting of wild game by ordinary people. This endangered many wild species. It is more than likely that it was William de Ferrers who brought the Chartley Wild Cattle onto his 1000 acres estate and enclosed it for their protection. Like many barons he probably already had his own Deer Park By his action

William de Ferrers undoubtedly saved the original Wild Cattle of Chartley for the next seven hundred years.

A local tradition still held to-day is that the fate of the Ferrers was bound up with the fate of the wild cattle. The birth of a black calf was supposed to mean the death of one of the family. Another centuries' old prediction forecast the fall of the House of Ferrers if the herd lost its purity. A black calf was always killed at birth to ensure the purity of the herd. The colour of the cattle was white except for the muzzle, ears and tips of the horns which were jet black

The descendants of the Ferrers were the Devereux and through marriage they acquired the title Earls of Essex. Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, became a favourite of Queen Elizabeth 1 but lost his head because of his rebellious nature. There is a belief that one of the Earls of Essex had the bridge over the River Trent at Great Haywood built to ensure that he could more easily go hunting on Cannock Chase. Essex Bridge, as it is called, links Great Haywood with Shugborough. In the Victorian County History series of Staffordshire it is asserted that one of the earls funded the building of the Shire Hall in Stafford when he became Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire. The Lords of the Manor of Chartley were indeed rich and powerful.

By 1545 Chartley Castle was in ruins and the Devereux family who had married into the Ferrers family had built the moated manor Chartley Hall nearby. It was at Chartley Hall that Elizabeth 1 stayed for a week in August 1575 during which time she visited Stafford. Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned at Chartley Hall between December 1585 and September 21, 1586

The original Hall was destroyed by fire in 1781. A smaller Hall that replaced it also burnt down in 1847. The present Hall dates from that period. It would seem that a portion of the old Hall still exists and is nearest the moat.

Chartley Hall or Manor later was the home to the Shirleys who married into the Ferrers family and whose descendants

acquired the title Earls Ferrers. Chartley was to remain in the Ferrers bloodline for nearly 700 years from 1232 to 1904 when Chartley was sold by Sewallis Shirley, 10th Earl Ferrers, to Sir William Congreve.

In recent times Chartley Hall has been occupied by the Congreves, the Harrisons, the Johnsons, John, Earl of Shrewsbury, the Formbys, the Unwins and finally David Johnson, nephew of the Johnsons who owned Chartley in the 1940's.

THE LORDS OF THE MANOR AND

OWNERS OF CHARTLEY ESTATE

Pre 1220	The Saxon Earl Algar
1220 - 1232	Ranulph de Blundeville, Earl of Chester, Norman Earl
1232 - 1904	The De Ferrers, Norman Earls and their descendants
1904 - 1939	The Congreve family *
1939 - 1946	The Johnsons
1946 - 1974	John, Earl of Shrewsbury
1974 - 1988	The Formbys
1988 - 1992	The Unwins
1992	David Johnson

*When General William Congreve was appointed Governor of Malta he leased Chartley to a Mr. and Mrs. Harrison who owned a cotton mill in Bradford. The Harrisons leased Chartley between 1926 and 1931 approximately.

A PRISON FOR MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Based on an article called ‘ Gentleman’s Journey’ from an unknown local newspaper.

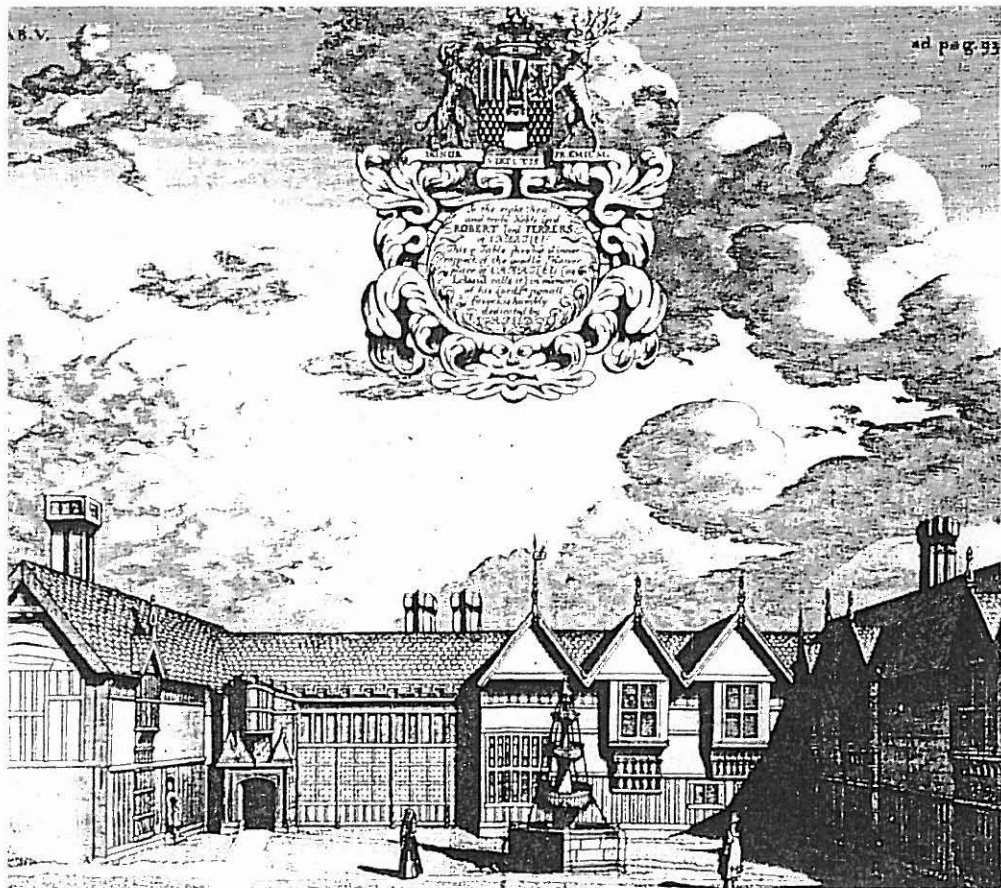
The romantic ruined towers of Chartley Castle built by an Earl of Chester about 1220 remain still to remind us of the history of the later owners of this estate.

Ranulph Earl of Chester died without heirs and his lands were divided between his sisters of whom Agnes received Chartley. Agnes married William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby and the Chartley Estate was to remain with their descendants for over six and half centuries.

In 1266 however William’s son Robert lost Chartley Castle for his part in the Barons’ Rebellion against King John. Robert did not accept defeat lightly and regained his castle by force only to be besieged by the Earl of Lancaster. As punishment Robert was deprived of the Earldom of Derby but was allowed to keep Chartley.

Some years later, Anne Ferrers, daughter and heiress of the last Baron Ferrers of Chartley married Sir Walter Devereux who was summoned to Parliament as Baron Ferrers of Chartley i.e. with his father-in-law’s title. In 1485 he was killed at the Battle of Bosworth while fighting for King Richard III.

His son John, who now became Baron Ferrers of Chartley, served in Parliament under King Henry VII. He married Cecily grand-daughter and heiress of the Earls of Essex. Their son, Walter Devereux, in honour of his military action



Chartley Hall circa 1686

from a print in Robert Plot's 'The Natural History of Staffordshire.'

Elizabeth 1 stayed at Chartley Hall for one week in August 1575 during which she visited Stafford.

Ten years later, her cousin, the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, was imprisoned at Chartley Hall much to the annoyance of its owner, the Second Earl of Essex, who was later to become a favourite of Elizabeth. Mary was held here from December 1585 to September 1586 when she was taken to Fotheringhay where she was tried and then executed.

Nearby Chartley Castle was already in ruins. Leland, the historian, reported in 1545 that 'ye castle was in ruine.'

The original Hall was destroyed by fire in 1781. A smaller Hall that replaced it was burnt down in 1847. The present Hall dates from that period.

for King Henry VI, was created Viscount Hereford. He died in 1558 and is buried with his two wives in the church of St. John the Baptist at Stowe by Chartley.

In 1572 his grandson Walter was created Earl of Essex, still bearing the title Baron Ferrers of Chartley among all his other titles. He was installed as a Knight of the Garter and created Earl Marshall of Ireland – in which post he died in 1576 in Dublin leaving heavy debts inherited by his young son Robert. Robert became the Second Earl of Essex. Robert was a handsome young man with success in War and he soon became a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1585 because of the unhealthy conditions of Tutbury Castle, where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned, it was decided to move her to Chartley Hall as an alternative prison. This had been built nearly forty years earlier for Baron Ferrers in preference to the castle which at this time was in ruins. The main point in Chartley's favour was the large moat which improved security. Queen Elizabeth already knew the Hall as she had visited there in 1575 and been entertained by Lettice, mother of Robert Essex, her favourite. Robert, who was now the Second Earl of Essex, complained bitterly about his home being used as a prison. The young earl even thought that Mary would damage his home in revenge against his father who had been one of her guards at Tutbury. The Earl of Essex was over ruled and Mary was brought to Chartley where her health much improved. The Queen of Scots was allowed out to hunt in the splendid 1,000 acre park which was well stocked with game and deer.

It was while she was at Chartley that Mary Queen of Scots was involved in a plot to arrange her escape. It became known as the Babington Plot. Mary thought her secret correspondence to the Catholic Babington was safe hidden in the ale barrels that were carried between Burton and Chartley. Unknown to her it was also seen by her keeper Paulet who had himself arranged the hidden route with the help of a double agent Gilbert Gifford.

One day Paulet invited Mary to go hunting for buck possibly on Cannock Chase. Mary willing agreed and the small party set off through Stowe towards Hixon and Great Haywood. When Mary saw a group of riders coming towards her it is said that she thought they were her hoped for rescuers but they were the guards who were to accompany her to nearby Tixall Hall where she was kept under guard until her rooms at Chartley Hall were thoroughly searched.

Mary was eventually returned to Chartley Hall and soon after that she was escorted under guard on her journey to her place of trial and execution at Fotheringhay. The Queen spent one night at Hall Hill in Abbots Bromley. Mary was executed in 1587.

In 1590 Robert Second Earl of Essex secretly married Frances, widow of Sir Philip Sydney, soldier hero, with whom Essex had fought. Elizabeth appreciated the Earl's prowess and installed him as a Knight of the Garter. She sent him as commander to quell the Spaniards whom he defeated at the Battle of Cadiz. His London home, Essex House, near The Strand, soon became an important centre of foreign 'intelligence'. In 1599 the Queen sent Essex to command an army to quell the rebellion by the Earl of Tyrone in Ireland. Having arrived there however, Essex disobeyed the Queen's orders and made a truce with Tyrone.

Elizabeth was very angry and forbade Essex to return to England but being impetuous he returned to England and burst unannounced into the Queen's presence at Nonsuch Palace in London. Soon afterwards Essex was put into custody in the Tower of London.

When he was released the Queen refused to see him. He was overwhelmed by illness and excessive debt. Essex and his friends planned a coup. They felt Elizabeth was being wrongly influenced by those around her. The coup was a failure and Essex was tried for treason. Elizabeth, with obviously mixed feelings, signed Essex' death warrant and the following day 25 February 1601 at the age of thirty four,

Robert, Second Earl of Essex, dressed in black, was executed at the Tower of London. Elizabeth herself died just a few years later in 1603. She was seventy.

Robert Essex left three young children, Frances, Dorothy and a son Robert to whom the honours lost at his father's execution were restored in 1604 by James I, the son of Mary Queen of Scots. Robert thus became the Third Earl of Essex. After being a Royal supporter in the Civil War. Robert Essex joined the Parliamentarians becoming a General. He died four years later and was buried in 1646 in Westminster Abbey with members of both Houses of Parliament in attendance.

The Earl's only son had died in infancy and the Earldom had now expired. The other titles went into abeyance until the monarchy was restored when they were revived by King Charles II.

Dorothy, younger daughter of the Second Earl of Essex, who had inherited Chartley, married Sir Henry Shirley of Staunton Harold, Leicestershire. Their second son, Robert, died in the Tower of London, having been committed there by Oliver Cromwell. It was his second son, also called Robert, on whom the revived Barony of Ferrers devolved and in 1677 Sir Robert Shirley became Lord Ferrers of Chartley.

Lord Ferrers was a Privy Councillor of King William III and also of Queen Anne who in 1711 created him Viscount Tamworth and Earl Ferrers.

Lord Ferrers had married Elizabeth Washington and they had seventeen children but only five survived. His eldest daughter, Anne, married the heiress of John de Ferrers of Tamworth Castle, and died before his father and son.

The Earl died in 1717 and was succeeded firstly by his second son Washington and secondly by his third son Henry. The peerage then passed to Laurence, son of the first Earl's fourth son.

Sadly Laurence, Fourth Earl Ferrers, brought unpleasant notoriety to the Earldom of Ferrers. It would appear that he had inherited the madness that it was alleged ran in the family.

In 1752 Laurence married Mary Meredith from Cheshire but he treated her brutally and she obtained a separation order from him by an Act of Parliament.

Lord Ferrers was not on good terms with anyone and his increasing violent temper caused his relatives to consider having a commission of lunacy brought against him.

However, between these attacks of madness, the earl was perfectly shrewd and courteous.

In 1760 the Court of Chancery ordered that all rents for Lord Ferrers must be paid to a receiver. Ferrers chose his steward John Johnson but soon found out it was not as easy to get his money from his steward as he had imagined it would be.

While outwardly appearing to be on good terms with Johnson inwardly Lord Ferrers was planning how to get rid of his steward.

On a visit to his Leicestershire seat Ferrers made an appointment with Johnson and arranged for as many people as possible to be away from the house. When Johnson refused to sign an account of his own villainy as imagined by Ferrers Lord Ferrers shot and gravely wounded him. Perhaps suddenly regaining his sanity or perhaps in remorse Ferrers then rushed around for help. He later threatened to kill anyone who came near him. Fortunately, he later drank himself to sleep.

Johnson later died of his wounds. Lord Ferrers was arrested and after a brief spell in Leicester Gaol he was taken to London to be tried by his peers in the House of Lords. The trial lasted from the 16 to 18 April 1760 and the earl was found guilty of murder. His family's plea that he be considered insane was rejected. Dressed in his white wedding suit embroidered with silver, Lord Ferrers travelled in his own landau to Tyburn.

On the morning of May 5, 1760 Laurence, Fourth Earl Ferrers of Chartley was hanged with a silk rope 'in consideration of his rank'. His hanging was watched by 200,00 people. It wasn't everyday you could witness the execution of a lord.

His mutilated body was later put on public view. The Earl died without issue and the title passed to his brother Washington and secondly to his brother Robert. During the Earldom of Robert the half-timbered manor house burnt down and a smaller house was built. Robert's two sons became successively seventh and eighth Earls who spent more and more time at the family home in Staunton Harold, Leicestershire. They only made occasional visits to their Chartley Estate.

In 1834 Washington, the eight Earl Ferrers, sold the furniture of Chartley Hall and in later visits stayed with his more 'opulent tenants'. In 1847 Chartley Hall burnt down and was replaced with another one which remained in the Shirley family until the hall was sold with the estate in 1904. Thus ended the association of Chartley with the Barons and Earls of Ferrers after more than 650 years.



Legend has it that one of the Earls of Essex from Chartley Hall a few miles from here had this bridge built to make it easier for him and his companions to cross the River Trent to hunt on nearby Cannock Chase.



CHARTLEY WHITE CATTLE

In May 1905 the remnant of Chartley's famous herd of wild white cattle was put on a train bound for Woburn. The cattle had been purchased from Earl Ferrers of Chartley by the Duke of Bedford for his estate. Only five animals, some say eight left Chartley. On the rail journey litter in the wagon caught fire, possibly from an overheated axle, and most of the cattle were badly burnt. Two of the cows were so badly burnt that they later died.

On arrival at Woburn only one animal, a bull, was able to be used for breeding. The Chartley bull was crossed with a Longhorn cow and the resulting descendants do not appear to be much different from the old herd that once roamed Chartley Park. Before the Second World War the Chartley herd numbered sixty and in the fifties there were fifteen to twenty Chartley Wild White Cattle at Woburn.

CHARTLEY PARK,

About seven miles North-East of Stafford, and five miles South-West of Uttoxeter.

PARTICULARS AND CONDITIONS OF SALE

OF THE ABSOLUTELY

UNIQUE HERD

OF WILD CATTLE,

DESCRIBED BY NATURALISTS AS

"The lineal descendants of the original British
Wild Ox."

Messrs. WALTON & LEE

Having sold the "Chartley Chase Estate," have received instructions from
THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL FERRERS to offer the above for Sale by Auction,

IN ONE LOT,

At the Auction Mart, Tokenhouse Yard, London, E.C.,

On THURSDAY, the 8th day of DECEMBER, 1904,

At TWO o'Clock precisely (unless previously sold by Private Treaty).

Copies of these Particulars may be obtained of Messrs. JOHN GERMAN & SON, Land
Agents Ashby-de-la-Zouch; or of the Auctioneers,

10, Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, London, W.

THE HERD OF WILD CATTLE

IN CHARTLEY PARK

Is described by Naturalists as the "lineal descendants of the original British Wild Ox."

Their descent may be traced back to the time of Henry III., when, according to the *Field* newspaper, "some of the wild cattle of the country which had previously roamed at large in the Forest of Needwood were driven into the Park which then was formed by the ancestors of the present Earl Ferrers."

This enclosure of the cattle took place doubtless in consequence of the passing of the *Charta Forestae* (1225), which enacted that all lands which had been afforested by Henry II., Richard I. and John, except the proper demesnes of the Crown, should be disafforested and freed from the Forest laws, so as to remit to former owners their rights. Thereupon it appears William, Earl of Derby, conveyed some of the predecessors of the existing cattle to his Park at Chartley, where they have ever since been carefully preserved and the breed kept in its original purity.

The animals present a most picturesque appearance, their most striking characteristics having recently been described as a "heavy deep body with long and level back, the horns growing out of the head horizontally and slightly downwards for some distance and then curving upwards. Their colouring is pure white with jet black ears, muzzle, hoofs, and tips of horns ; the hair is somewhat coarse, and on the top of the head between the horns there is a mass of long, curly hair in both sexes, forming a regular 'mop-wig.' In the bulls the horns are often shorter and straighter than those of the cows."

According to recent public records the numbers of the herd have shown considerable fluctuations, as is mentioned in the article just referred to.

In 1851 Mr. Evelyn Shirley stated that there were forty-eight head, while in 1873 this number was reduced to twenty-seven. In 1877, when Mr. A. H. Cocks visited the Park, as described by him in the *Zoologist* in 1878, the herd consisted of twenty animals. From twenty they were gradually reduced to twelve. In 1884 Mr. J. R. Masfield found twenty-eight head, and three had recently been killed, while in 1886 Mr. E. de Hamel reported an increase to thirty.

In 1887 a Committee, appointed by the British Association for the purpose of preparing a report on the herds of wild cattle then existing in Great Britain, found that the herd numbered thirty-four head, and this number was further increased until 1895, when Mr. J. R. Masfield again appears to have inspected the herd, and reported the existence of forty-three beasts ; while the same gentleman once more visited the Park in 1902, when a large diminution in the numbers had taken place, consequent upon an attack of tuberculosis, the effects of which have now, it is believed, completely disappeared.

The following is a statement of the present constitution of the herd:--

1 Cow	-	-	-	about 7 years old
3 Cows	-	-	-	" 3 " "
1 Cow	-	-	-	" 2 " "
1 Yearling Heifer				
2 Bull Calves				about 6 months old
1 Bull				" 1½ years old

With the re-established health of the herd an increase corresponding with that which took place following the opening years of the 1880 decade may confidently be anticipated.

The purity of the breed is incontestable, as no alien strain has at any time been introduced into the herd.

It is a matter of general knowledge that the herds of wild cattle in Great Britain are extremely limited, and there are believed to be none in existence beside those of Chillingham and Chartley in England, Hamilton in Scotland, and Vaynol in Wales. Of these, that of Vaynol was purchased from Sir John Ord of Kilmory and was satisfactorily transported to its present habitat.

It will be recognized therefore that there could not be found a more unique, picturesque, or interesting ornament for the park of a nobleman or gentleman of fortune than the celebrated herd which is now being offered for sale.

DEATH OF MR. A. G. JOHNSON

WELL-KNOWN CHARTLEY RESIDENT

The death took place on Tuesday of last week, of Mr. Alfred George Johnson, Chartley Hall, Stowe-by-Chartley. Born in 1883 at Gnosall, he was the fourth son of the late Robert and Sarah Johnson, of Butterton Hall, near Newcastle-under-Lyme. Educated in the United States for a short time, he later went to Newcastle High School and afterwards to Rugby.

He entered the firm of H. and R. Johnson, tile manufacturers, at Cobridge, with his brothers, the late Col. H. Johnson, and Mr. George Johnson, who was killed in the 1914-18 War. The business later expanded to Highgate, Tunstall, and Eastwood, Hanley. He carried on this business successfully until his retirement in 1936, during which period he lived in Newcastle and Stone.

On his retirement he took up farming and lived at Chartley Hall. He did a great deal of valuable work for the hospitals and was a keen supporter of Stone Cricket Club, and a very active member of Trentham Golf Club.

Being a keen sportsman, he excelled as a shot and devoted a great deal of his time to shooting and salmon fishing, both at home and in Scotland. He owned large estates and was particularly interested in estate work.

He took a very active interest in village life and the Church at Stowe-by-Chartley.

He leaves a wife, son (Mr. A. H. Johnson, proprietor of the Chartley Turkey Farm), and daughter.



A.H.(Sonny) Johnson
who owned Chartley
Turkey Farm. His wife
was Beth Johnson.

MUSEUM WINS BACK MEDALS

The First World War medals awarded to Major "Billy" Congreve, who lived at Chartley, near Uttoxeter, and include the Victoria Cross and the two other highest awards for gallantry were sold at Sotherby's for £26,000.

They were bought by Major Congreve's old regiment, the Royal Green Jackets, after his daughter, Mary had insisted on selling them.

The major's younger brother, Major Christopher Congreve, aged 80, who had wanted the medals to go to the regimental museum free of charge, said he was delighted that the museum had secured them.

BETH JOHNSON

Beth Johnson, one of a family of two brothers and a sister, was born in Princes Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, on the 23rd March 1910. Her father, Henry Charles Sawyer, member of a Wiltshire farming family, moved first to Herefordshire and then to North Staffordshire where he became a glazed tile manufacturer.

Beth was educated at a private school near Stoke-on-Trent before going to Wycombe Abbey for five years. Her concern for members of the community was expressed in many ways, notably by nursing at Stafford General Infirmary and at Sandon Hall, near Stone during the war as a member of the Red Cross, and also by her involvement with the Meals on Wheels service over a period of years.



BETH JOHNSON

The organisations which bear the name of Beth Johnson owe their existence to a woman who spent much of her life caring for others. Beth Johnson, nee Sawyer, one of a family of two brothers and a sister, was born in Princes Road, Hartshill, Stoke on Trent, on the 23rd March 1910. Her father, Henry Charles Sawyer, a member of a Wiltshire farming family, moved first to Hertfordshire and then to North Staffordshire where he became a glazed tile manufacturer.

Beth was educated at a private school near Stoke on Trent before going to Wycombe Abbey for five years. Her concern for members of the community was expressed in many ways, notably as a Red Cross nurse at Stafford General Infirmary and at Sandon Hall during the Second World War. She later became involved with the Meals on Wheels service.

Beth was married to Alfred 'Sonny' Johnson, the son of a pottery manufacturer. Alfred's parents lived at Chartley Hall and during the war Sonny ran a turkey farm on his father's estate at Chartley. The couple lived at the Manor House, Weston just a few miles from Chartley. Alfred had a stamp business and had a walk-in room installed by Chubb for his stamp collection – the room was filled with shelves displaying the stamps. 'Sonny' Johnson was the principal stamp distributor in the country and would send collectors new editions world-wide.

When Beth Johnson died on October 12, 1971 her husband, Alfred, approached a distant relative, Mrs. Rita Tetlow, and suggested that the proceeds from Beth's estate should be used to establish an organisation which would benefit elderly people. It was in this way that the Beth Johnson Foundation was formed in 1972. A few years later the Beth Johnson Housing Association was formed and this operates completely independently with its own committee and staff.

BY SARAH KIRBY

IT CAN be a bit disconcerting talking to Staffordshire's High Sheriff-elect and his wife. Ask Mrs Johnson a question and husband David might come up with an answer. Make a comment to him and Virginia replies. They even arrive at their house in matching red Range Rovers.

But the office of High Sheriff is supposed to be all about teamwork, with the wife indispensable to the role. They certainly seem to work well together - whether it's discussing how many people can be fed from a big joint she's just dug out of the freezer, or speaking for each other.

That's partly because neither seem to enjoy talking about themselves too much - Mrs Johnson, who politely refused to have her photo taken, says as much about her husband.

"He's a very private man, so to do a public job is not his usual way," she says.

And he is adamant that his role - which takes effect from April next year - will be utterly separate from his job as chairman and owner of Steelite International plc, manufacturers of ceramic hotelware and 'world leader' in its field.

He takes out some 'before and after' photos of his factory site in Stoke, explaining that he acquired the assets of the hotelware division from Royal Doulton.

"And Steelite International has grown ever since," he says, pointing out the shiny new factory. It is obviously something he is very proud of, which he admits without elaboration.

"And so he should be," his wife pipes up. "He's achieved an awful lot."

Sixty-one year old Mr Johnson is a Staffordshire man born and bred - apart from public schooling at Stowe in Buckinghamshire - and seems intensely proud of his county. He started in the family ceramics business, Johnson Brothers, straight from school.

"We were acquired by Wedgwood in the late '60s and I worked for them for almost 15 years." He left as joint managing director of one of its divisions.

He accepts it is right to give something back to a county he loves - though he stresses he is already doing that through numerous other activities. But asked why he was nominated for the High Sheriff position, he keeps listing the official guidelines as to what type of person can be chosen: preferably having lived in the county for so many years, known within the county; never been declared bankrupt; no police record.

So why were you chosen? "We'll, I've never been bankrupt and so on."

Oh, come on, you don't have to be modest. He finally admits to being a well-known figure in the county and that he intends to do a good job.

"I'm known in the county and known in Stafford Borough and in Stoke," he says. "I'm also known in the ceramics industry, by both the unions and the employers."

He adds: "Yes, I feel it's doing something good for your county." His wife says: "I think he sees it as his duty."

These duties include entertaining visiting judges and their spouses and attending some official gatherings in ceremonial dress, though there's only a handful every year. When asked what exactly it is a High Sheriff does, Mr Johnson sorts through his briefcase and hauls out various pieces of paper. Lots of homework to do then?

"Oh no, I don't need to do any homework on it." He just wants to make sure the facts are absolutely accurate.

"We're responsible for issuing all royal writs and have a responsibility for the safety of visiting judges, which means attendance at court for 15 days and looking after them occasionally in the evening."

"The High Sheriff's wife looks after the judge's wife if she comes up with him."

He agrees the role is basically a tradition, compared to the duties his counterpart of a thousand years ago might have had. Was he brought up to be very aware of tradition?

"Well, I know the current Lord Lieutenant and I knew the previous one. It's an accepted thing, having been a soldier, even for a short space of time. I became used to traditions and the formal aspects of certain occasions."

The soldiering was a national service commission in the 7th Queen's Own.

Both Mr and Mrs Johnson are adamant their new roles - which last for a year - will be just another duty to run alongside their already very busy lives. Virginia says that, while she finds it hard to describe what she actually does, she rarely has space in her diary.

"We're both so busy, we hardly ever watch any television. We get home around 10.30, so we might catch Newsnight then go to bed," she said.

They both have to dash off - almost climbing into the wrong Range Rovers - straight after the interview, which takes place in the estate office of Chartley Manor.

The place belonged to Mr Johnson's uncle for almost 30 years, and he used to visit it as a child, obviously a fond memory. Now Mr and Mrs Johnson are the proud owners.

"We're just lucky that it came on the market and it came at the right time," said Mr Johnson. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity which I grabbed."

His wife added: "He made occasional visits as a child and he loved it."

But they clearly don't want to talk too much about their life at Chartley Manor - though they're too polite to ask for a change of subject - so we go back to the role of High Sheriff. Are they gradually gearing up for it?

"It's something that's in the back of my mind, but it's not a good thing to discuss. It's just happening," Mr Johnson says. "He will do it very well," his wife adds.

I think secretly he's really looking forward to it, but it's probably not the done thing to admit as much.

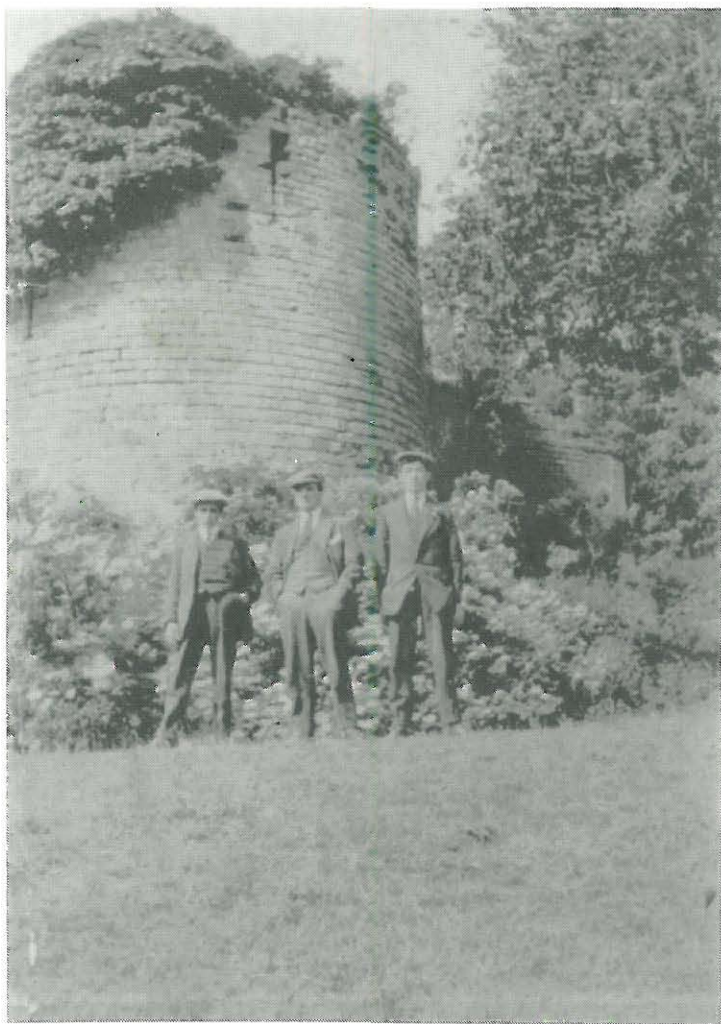
"The aim is to do a good job and make your contribution for the benefit of the county. And so because you're going to do it, you make the most of it and enjoy it to the full!" he says, breaking into a cheerful grin.

DAVID JOHNSON

High Sheriff



David Johnson



Three unknown young men by the ruins of Chartley Castle possibly in the 1920's or even earlier. If you can identify them please contact me.

Lady Congreve's Poem about Chartley.

Egypt in June.

The sun in all his splendour in the hot skies set
Burns down on palm and garden, on tower and minaret,
But oh for Chartley, the grey skies at Chartley -
The green fields round Chartley
And the woods all wet.

Broad flows the ancient river - green and gold it gleams -
Through dead and living cities as wonderful as dreams,
But oh for Chartley, the still lake at Chartley -
The cool moat round Chartley,
And the noise of the streams.

The sky is liquid scarlet when the sunset glows,
And fairy mists of gold are dancing through the rose,
But oh for Chartley, the clear skies at Chartley -
The primrose sky at Chartley
When the daylight goes.

There are floods of molten silver from a monster moon
And faint with their own fragrance the strange flowers swoon,
But oh for Chartley, the sweet airs of Chartley -
Sweetbriar and hay at Chartley
On a night in June.

**Poem courtesy of the late Mrs. Eileen Evans
of Mill Cottage, Chartley.**

ACCIDENTS AT CHARTLEY BANK

On Friday January 8, 1971 at 11.45 a.m. a 29 year old male driver was killed and his female passenger was seriously injured at Chartley Bend. A female passenger aged 21 was seriously injured. No other vehicle was involved.

On Thursday October 18, 1973 at 7.40 a.m. a 20 year old woman was killed when the bus in which she was a passenger in collided with a heavy goods vehicle at Chartley Bank.

The 24 year old driver of the goods vehicle, the 49 year old bus driver and a 47 year old female passenger suffered serious injuries. Daylight with snow/ice.

On Friday March 11, 1983 at 11.10 a.m. a male driver aged 37 and a male driver aged 62 suffered fatal injuries when their goods vehicles collided at Chartley Bank.

On Friday May 14, 1993 at 8.25 a.m. a male driver aged 32 suffered a serious injury when his car collided with another car near Chartley.

On Thursday October 27, 1983 at 8.15 a.m. a 53 year old male driver and his 58 year old female passenger were killed when the car in which they were travelling collided with a goods vehicle at Chartley Bank.

A 22 year old female passenger in the car suffered a serious injury. Two dogs in the car also died. Daylight condition and road wet

On Sunday October 30, 1983 a 56 year old female passenger was killed when the car in which she was travelling collided with another car at Chartley Bank. Darkness condition and road wet.



Albert Armett's father, Thomas, of Chartley Manor Farm who served with the Royal Horse Artillery during the 1914-18 War in France. On his return he farmed at Drointon. He died in his thirties leaving a young family.

ALBERT ARMETT'S STORY

Grandfather tenant farmer at Chartley Manor Farm under Sir William Congreve, Father 1914-18 War, Father called up, Grandfather's horses requisitioned, School at Stowe under Mr.Prince, Changing jobs, Shooting rabbits during the Second World War for rabbit money, Delivering milk to Grindley Station, Taking pot-shots at a German plane over Bowgage Farm, English Electric, Working for myself at Highfields Farm, Selling up and retirement.

My name is Albert Armett. I was born on May 17, 1929 at Old Hall Farm, Drointon where my parents Thomas and Edith Armett, nee Wilson, farmed. My grandfather Thomas Armett was a tenant farmer at Chartley Manor Farm which like my parents' farm was then part of the Chartley Estate. My grandfather farmed at Chartley Manor Farm for thirty six years and I believe he rented the farm from Sir William Congreve until 1939. It was a 400 acre farm and my grandfather carried on mixed farming there with beef, milking cows, sheep and crops. There was a lot of ploughing using horses to pull the ploughs. Bert Evans' father Harold Evans did a lot of the work with the horses for my grandfather as did Bert himself.

My father was called up in the 1914-18 War and served with the Royal Horse Artillery in France. At the time the government took a man from each family to fight in the war. The government also requisitioned horses from farms up and down the country. Grandfather Armett had a lot of horses at Chartley Manor Farm and a number were taken to pull field guns in France, I believe. I was told it took four horses to

pull each gun which weighed one and half tons.

I went to school at Stowe by Chartley School where I was taught by Mr. Prince who was an old soldier. Mr. Prince's son Jim was a classmate of mine. Jim became a teacher and taught in a school in Uttoxeter at one stage. The other teacher at the school was Miss Prince, no relation to Mr. Prince the head teacher. She later married Bill Mellor a second cousin of mine. In 1932 when I was just three years old my father died. He was just thirty four years old and left my mother with seven children to look after. My sister Gladys and I went to live with our grandparents at Chartley Manor Farm. My mother continued farming at Old Hall Farm, Drointon with the help of Jack Astle. When I was older I helped out at times.

I first went to Bradley School in Uttoxeter, then to the Heath School also in Uttoxeter and finally to Colwich School. A friend of mine from my schooldays in Colwich is Roy Steele who lives at Wychdon Lodge near Paturefields on the Stone – Rugeley Road. Part of Wychdon Lodge was demolished by a low flying Wellington bomber during the war.

About 1939 when he retired Grandfather Armett gave up Chartley Manor Farm. He bought Holly Bank Farm, a twenty five acre farm at Highwood, Uttoxeter and my sister Gladys and I went to live with him, my Auntie Elsie and Uncle Les. Chartley Manor Farm was broken up into lots and re-let to a number of other tenant farmers. The Manor itself was rented to Graham Allen whose son Jeremy now lives there.

When I left school I had different farm jobs in the Uttoxeter area.. The first job I had was with my uncle Fred Armett at Bowgage Farm on the Stafford – Uttoxeter Road and I stayed there for about four years. At Bowgage Farm we used to have 12 bore guns on the farm for killing vermin. Uncle Fred applied for ammunition from WAEC – the War Agriculture Executive Committee to get rid of the vermin and in particular the rabbits who were destroying the crops. We'd shoot the rabbits and then sell them at 1/6d each. There was quite a

demand for them as it was good meat which was scarce during the war. My uncle Albert Armett, who farmed near us at New Buildings Farm, put the local bobby on to me for shooting rabbits on his farm. I had a visit from Bobby Sims, the local policeman, from Leigh who gave me a friendly warning.

While working at Bowgage Farm we used to take the milk in seventeen gallon churns on the back of George Robinson's lorry to Grindley Station where they would be loaded on to the Milk Train bound for London. I can tell you those churns were very heavy when they were full. The train driver and the guard on the Milk Train used to pester us to get them some rabbits. They said that people were starving in London. I supplied them with rabbits. My wages in those days were rabbit money.

A friend of mine from those days is Ken Pearson. He used to work for Bill Hodgkins at Keepers Farm near the General's Farmhouse. We used to mess about with motorbikes a lot. Ken married at the church in Stowe by Chartley. He now lives in Cheddleton. We've been good friends for over fifty years.

I can remember Samson's House along Stowe Lane being demolished because it was too near the runway at Hixon Airfield. For a short while I worked for Graham Allen at my grandfather's old farm Manor Farm.

During the war I was in the Home Guard at Drointon, where Captain Westhorpe was in command. I had a brother-in-law called Vic Tomlin who was a pilot officer. I had gone to my mother's farm Old Hall Farm at Drointon to help out. One day while working with Jack Astle at the farm we heard a German aeroplane coming over. You could tell that it was in trouble as one of its engines was spluttering and it was flying at an angle. It was only forty or fifty yards above us and we could clearly see the German pilot. Jack shouted to me to get the 303 rifle and some bullets. Jack started taking pot shots at the German plane without much hope of hitting it. He

actually hit the plane causing an engine to cut out. We ran like mad for the cover of a farm building. We later heard that the German plane had opened up with its machine guns on the bus station at Rugeley. Fortunately no one was hurt. They all heard the plane approaching and everyone ran for cover. I heard later that the plane had crashed at Lichfield. Apart from the German pilot I don't think anyone was killed.

My next job was with Davies, Corn Merchants of Uttoxeter collecting corn and taking it to the farms. It was hard graft and back-breaking work carrying 100 weight sacks up steps. I worked five and a half days a week for just £8 per week. I stayed there for about three years. I eventually got a job driving for Gallimores collecting milk from dairies up and down the county and delivering it to Coventry and Wolverhampton. I worked seven days a week but it was lot more money.

Sometime after that I went to work on the furnaces at English Electric on the night shift where I doubled my wages. My shift was from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. I stayed at English Electric for five years. Of course, it is now known as Alstom. During this period my wife Hazel and I lived at Blythe Bridge, Kingston, with our two children Geoffrey and Valerie.

Bill Roberts, a blacksmith from Marchington, had kept The Blacksmith's Arms there. When his first wife died Bill had given up the pub and I used to help his daughter Mildred Lawley and her husband Vic with some casual work on the farm whenever he went on holiday. It was while working there that I met my wife Hazel Brandon who was on holiday there from here parents' farm Priory Farm, Walton, Stone. Later my aunt Elsie and Bill were married.

When I left English Electric I went to work for a cousin of mine Edgar Brinkler at Callowhill Farm near Blithfield Reservoir. He'd had a run in with a Friesian bull which had charged him, broken his arm and dislocated his shoulder. He was saved by his collie who kept jumping up at the bull. In the

end the collie bit onto the bull's tail and hung on until Edgar got to safety. About eighteen months later Edgar sold the farm. His mother Edith nee Armett loaned me the money to buy a small farm. I bought Highfields Farm, a fifty acre farm in Hilderstone where my wife and I ran a dairy farm as well as doing sheep farming. We farmed there for about thirty five years until I turned seventy. It was right at the start of the BSE crisis. We sold the farm off in lots. The farmhouse was sold with ten acres of land. My wife and I now live nearby in a bungalow with two acres where I keep a horse so I haven't given up farming altogether. From our home you can see right across to Meaford Power Station near Stone and you can also see as far as Cotwalton.

The following extract from St. Mary's Register at Stafford tells its tale: "Mem. that the viii daie of August 1575 our Soverign Ladie Queene Elizabeth came from Chartley in progresse to Stafford Castle, and was Received upon the poole dam wthout the East gate by the Bayliffs and burgesses wth an oracion made by Mr. Launde the Schoole maister in the name of the Towne and the Bayliffs delivered to her mat^{ie} a goodlie large standing cup of sylver and gilt of xxx li price wth her hyghnes cheerefullie and thankfullie Received and so shee passed through the Eastgate streete the markt place the Crobury Lane and the broad eye and there over the River to Stafford parke in the seaventeenth yeare of her mat^{ies} most psperous raigne."



Mill Cottage, Chartley.

In October 1942 a Wellington bomber taking off from Hixon airfield crashed near the cottage killing all the crew.

The Massey lived here and were followed by Bert and May Evans.

Bert Evans' story follows next and is followed by a short piece by his niece Marjorie who witnessed the plane crash near Mill Cottage.

That is followed by the stories of two young women who came separately to work at Chartley during World War Two. They came in response to the Government's call for women to replace the working men who had been called up to the Forces to fight Hitler's Germany. The first woman tells her story anonymously. The second story is from Joan English, a Land Girl, who stayed with a local family and ended up marrying one of the sons Sid Durose.

BERT EVANS' STORY

Grandfather Head Keeper on Chartley Estate,
Father wagoner for Mr.Arnett of Chartley
Manor Farm, Strange punishments for
misbehaviour at Stowe by Chartley School
in the 1920's, The Congreves at Chartley,
Chartley Show, the old railway line,
General's Farmhouse struck by lightning,
The Johnsons at Chartley, working there,
meeting my wife May, the local rabbit catcher,
The Curse of the Chartley Cattle, Building
Hixon Airfield, Crash of a Wellington plane
near Mill Cottage, Local families, Turkey
Farm at Chartley, working for Mr.Johnson.

My name is Harold Herbert 'Bert' Evans. I was born on October 27, 1914 at Keeper's Cottage, Chartley Bank on the Stafford-Uttoxeter road which had once been the home of the gamekeeper for the Chartley Estate opposite. My mother Fanny Evans, nee Johnson, gave the cottage a new name Castle Bank. It is still known by that name today although it is many years since we lived there. My father Harold Gregory Evans worked as a wagoner for Thomas Arnett, a tenant farmer on the Chartley Estate. His farm, Chartley Manor Farm, was at the top of Chartley Bank where Jeremy Allen lives today. My father started working for Thomas Arnett in 1914, I think, and looked after the horses on the 400 acre farm. Most of the work on farms in those days was done with horses and not tractors. While my father worked for Mr Arnett he broke in over one hundred horses for him.

My mother Fanny Evans was the daughter of Joseph Johnson, head keeper on the Chartley Estate. Earl Ferrers owned the estate in those days and the Johnsons lived in one of the cottages owned by him at Chartley Barn Farm. I had two sisters Frances Annie and Edna May. Frances married Ernest Fradley who was a signalman on the Stafford-Utttoxeter railway line at Grindley. Edna May married Herbert Evans who wasn't a relation of ours. Their first daughter Beryl died of meningitis when she was just four. Their second daughter Muriel lives in Hixon and her married name is Challinor. My grandfather Joseph Johnson was head keeper on the 3,000 acres Chartley Estate which stretched right down to Shirleywich on the London road or the A51. He had four keepers under him.

I went to the village school at Stowe by Chartley where Mr Daniel was the headmaster. The other teachers were May Collier from Amerton and Mrs. Daniel from Abbot's Bromley. Mr Daniel was very strict and some of his punishments were very odd. If any of the boys misbehaved he made them dress up in girls' clothes and then paraded them up to the village post office so everyone would know they had been misbehaving. When Mr Daniel left Mr Prince became headmaster. Just past the church by the crossroads on the left was the village post office run by Jenny Preston. She had a small holding in a field opposite. There was a well in the field not far from the road. Everyone had to fetch their water from wells in those days. There was no mains water on tap like today. Bungalows now stand on Jenny Preston's field. Just beyond that in Stowe Lane on the road to Hixon was the vicarage where the vicar of St John the Baptist Church lived. By the crossroads at the corner of Bridge Lane and Station Road were a number of cottages all thatched under the same roof. On the other side of the road in Bridge Lane was a large house called Cross Keys where Mr and Mrs. Walker lived. I believe Cross Keys had once been a pub. The Walkers had two children Billy and Sissie. Billy was in the school football team with me. I have an old photograph of our school team when we won the Trent

ON TO OUR GOLDEN OLDIE SLOT



PROUD cup winners Stowe-by-Chartley School are featured in our popular sporting yesteryear section this week.

This smartly-kitted team won the Trent Valley Schools Cup in the 1927-28 season and this picture was sent in by squad member Bill Barlow from Hixon (middle, extreme right).

Rest of the victorious team with headmaster Mr Deakin are from left, back row: Bert Evans, Harry

Deakin, Bill Walker, Jim Turner. Middle: Fred Armett, Alf Wells, Jim Tomlinson (captain), Arthur Astle, Bill Barlow; Front: Sid Armett, Arthur Ward.

If you have a sporting photograph - any sport - from yesteryear, why not relive past memories by featuring it in the Newsletter.

Send with SAE and brief details to: Sporting Yesteryear, Staffordshire Newsletter, Derby Street, Stafford, ST16 2DT.

Valley Cup. Our coach was the headmaster Mr Prince who in his earlier day had played for Aston Villa and Manchester City. Mrs. Walker's brother John Mayer made his home with them. His wish was that when he died that they bury him in the churchyard as close as possible to The Cock because he always drank there. Ernie Causer the village postman lodged with Mrs. Barber in Stowe Lane. A part-time postman named John Pool lived in one of the cottages opposite the church. Many years later the cottages were rebuilt and made into one big cottage. In my childhood there was a field where the present village post office now stands. Bob Massey, who was foreman on the Chartley Estate for fifty years, lived with his family at Toll Gate Cottage at the corner of Station Road and the main Stafford-Uttoxeter road. His wife Sarah used to make ginger beer, nettle beer and dandelion beer which she sold from the window of her front room. As children on our way home from school we stop there to buy a bottle at 1d or 2d (old money). When I was a boy the Colliers lived at Ivy Cottage, a thatched cottage at Amerton. Mr. Collier was, I believe, a saddler for the Chartley Estate. His son Edwin worked at Siemens in Stafford. Later it was known as English Electric, G.E.C. and now it is called Alstom. Another son Herbert emigrated to Canada. As I said earlier, a daughter May taught at Stowe by Chartley School. Another daughter, Ivy, married Jack Robinson who ran The Cock Inn at Stowe. It was Jack who started his own bus service which ran between Stowe and Stafford on market days. Jack's mother, Sarah Robinson, married Mr. Williams of Amerton Farm. When he died she went to live at The Cock Inn. William Johnson, the local blacksmith lived in the next cottage to the Colliers at Amerton. On the corner of Dimmocks Lane there was another cottage with the local blacksmith's shop adjoining it. There was a post box set in the wall of the blacksmith's shop. The house and the blacksmith's shop are both gone but there is still a post box on the corner. Mr and Mrs Chadwick lived up Dimmocks Lane. They had three children Sidney, Doris and Violet. Doris married Bill Arnett

from Chartley Manor Farm and went to live in Leicestershire. Violet trained as a singer and often used to sing solos in the parish church at Stow at Christmas and Easter. Mr. Williams lived near the Chadwicks. When I was a boy the Lindops were tenant farmers at Amerton Farm. Across the main road from the farm was The Plough Inn which was kept by Mrs. Leadbetter who lived there with her son Harry. Old Harry Williams was the tenant farmer at Sun Farm, Fradswell. All the farms and properties belonged to the Chartley Estate at that time. His son, also Harry, married Anne Bagnall who was a secretary for Mr. Johnson's son at his Chartley Turkey Farm. Mrs. Lloyd lived at Norman's wood Farm near Stowe with her two sons.

When I was a boy Chartley Estate was owned by Sir William Congreve who had bought it in 1904. When he was made Governor of Malta after World War I he let Chartley Hall to Mr and Mrs. Harrison, friends of his who owned woollen mills in Bradford. The Harrisons left about 1929 and Sir Geoffrey Congreve, Sir William's son, and his wife came to live at the hall. They had three daughters Miss Henrietta, Miss Carole and Miss Marigold. Despite their money the Congreves were a very friendly family and not at all snobbish or superior.

Every August Bank Holiday General Sir Walter and Lady Congreve opened up their grounds for Chartley Show. Garden Fetes were also held there on occasions and my job was to row people round the moat at the hall. My father told me that when he was a boy there were still Chartley Wild Cattle on Chartley Estate. There was supposed to be a curse associated with the Chartley Cattle and that when the herd died out so would the owners of Chartley Hall. There was also a local tradition that there was an underground passage from Chartley Castle to Chartley Hall. Sir Geoffrey actually found a tunnel by the moat of the hall and went in as far as was physically possible. He never found the end near the castle.

Most of the farms on Chartley Estate were rented by local farmers: Tom Arnett at Chartley Manor Farm, Mr Carter at

STOWE PARISH
Floral and Horticultural Show

For the Encouragement of COTTAGE GARDENING.

Schedule of Prizes

For the Twenty-Fourth

ANNUAL SHOW,

Bank-Holiday Monday, August 1st, 1927,

AT CHARTLEY CASTLE,

when the Grounds will be Open to the Public by Kind Permission
of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.

SHOW TO BE OPENED BY

LADY WINIFRED PENNOYEN

(of Ingestre Hall), at 2 p.m.

NUMEROUS ATTRACTIONS

will take place during the Afternoon and Evening including

BEECH'S AMUSEMENT FAIR.

**Exhibition of Fruit, Flowers, Vegetables, Farm Produce, and
Poultry, and Pigeons.**

VARIOUS SIDE SHOWS, ETC.

UTTOXETER TOWN BAND.

will play Selections of Music during the Afternoon and
for DANCING in the Evening.

TEAS at Moderate Prices. LICENCE TENT on the Ground.

ADMISSION 1/2 (from 2 till close).

School Children 6d.

38

Chartley Park Farm, Frank Williams at Barn Farm and Mr Murfin at Lodge Farm. There was a small farm leading down from Lodge Farm owned by Dr Marsen of Stafford. He had a bailiff, Mr Griffiths, who lived there and looked after it for him. Every night Mr Griffith's son Chris used to bring the milk down from the farm to Chartley Station for collection by the milk-train. I remember the Griffith's had two horses one white and one brown and the son alternated between the white one and the brown one to pull the cart taking the milk down to Chartley Station. Chris Griffiths always set off at a gallop from Lodge Farm.

I often went with my father Harold Evans to collect grain from the railway stations at Stowe and Grindley for Mr Arnett. I regularly used to catch the train from Stowe to get to Stafford or Uttoxeter. All the trains in those days were steam driven with coal burners. The stationmaster for Stowe by Chartley lived in a house near the station. The passenger service on the Stafford-Uttoxeter railway line finished in 1937. The line was used by the armed forces during the war. The goods service continued until the 1950's. I used to load sugar beet for Mr Johnson at Stowe station. When the line closed I took the beet by road to Allscott in Shropshire. After the railway line closed I used the Green Bus Service to get to Stafford or Uttoxeter. The bus drivers knew all their passengers and knew who was getting on and where they wanted to get off.

When Tom Arnett retired in 1939 my father went to work for his son Fred Arnett at Bowgage Farm further along towards Uttoxeter. We were still living at Castle Bank. One of my father's jobs was to drive the tractor. Tractors were just beginning to replace horses and were used for ploughing.

At fourteen I left Stowe by Chartley to start work at Mr Carter's dairy farm at Chartley Park Farm. In the summer months Mr Carter kept all his milk to make cheese. My job was to help Mrs Deakin and the other ladies in the dairy. I had to be at the farm for 7 o'clock each morning to get the boilers going to heat the hot water for the large vat which the milk would go into. Mr

Carter had a field near Chartley Castle called Castle Field. I heard the story that some of Mr Carter's cattle had been poisoned through eating yew which grew round the castle and General Congreve instead of paying any compensation let Mr Carter move to the Generals Farmhouse. Mr Carter also did some potato farming. During the potato-picking season a lot of Irish men came over to help with the crop. They were paid piece work at 10/- (50p in to-day's money) a time per cartload of potatoes. The men would work four in a line using forks to lift the potatoes from the furrows.

Later Mr Carter moved to a farm further along the road towards Utttoxeter called the General's Farmhouse built originally for General Sir Walter Congreve. The main road used to pass near the farm but when the road was re-aligned to straighten it out the old road past the General's Farmhouse became a cul de sac. On May 16, 1929 the General's Farmhouse was struck by lightning. I remember the date because it was the day of my confirmation at St. John the Baptist Church, Stowe by Chartley. A fire broke out and travelled from the farmhouse to the cheese room. The fire melted all the cheeses that were hanging from the beams there. I was given the job by Mr. Carter of guarding the farmhouse overnight. I was only fifteen and found it a bit eerie up there on my own. I was glad when daylight came. At the time of the lightning strike John Poole was sheltering in the doorway of Keeper's Cottage which was nearly opposite the General's Farmhouse on the other side of the road. He described the lightning as just like a blue bolt.

Mr. Carter took his cheeses and potatoes on his Chevrolet lorry to sell at Utttoxeter Market and sometimes to Derby Market. Mr. Carter's son Lawrence would drive the lorry. Later I used to go with Mr. Carter to the market. Eventually, Lawrence went to work at his uncle's mill in Bradford where he attended the machines. One day a large slop he was wearing got caught in one of the wheels and he was thrown to the ground and killed.

FARMHOUSE STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

Disastrous Fire at Chartley.

Occupants Escape Uninjured.

During the height of Monday afternoon's great storm, a farmhouse near Stafford, was struck by lightning, which demolished the roof and set the building ablaze, causing hundreds of pounds' worth of damage.

Two women—a daughter of the occupant and a maid—had a terrifying experience when the stunning crash and blinding detonation occurred while they were on the premises.

The house concerned was the Chartley Park Farm, situated on the Chartley Estate, about nine miles from Stafford on the Uttoxeter-road. The owner is Sir Geoffrey Congreve, and it is tenanted by Mr. P. Carter.

Without warning the house was struck between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time both Mr. Carter's daughter and a maid were in the house.

The flash passed through the house and to the back door, leaving in its track a pungent smell, said Miss Carter. Fortunately neither she nor the maid was hurt, but both were naturally greatly unnerved by the shock.

"I saw a ball of fire strike the roof and explode," an eye-witness later recounted. "It scattered the tiles and sent up a sheet of flame."

Immediately the house was struck, the entire roof burst into flames, and it was evident that the building, which was erected only four or five years ago at a cost of about £4,000, was in danger of being totally destroyed.

Post haste, a messenger was despatched to give the alarm by the nearest telephone, which is at Stowe-by-Chartley, two miles away. Stafford and Uttoxeter Fire Brigades were communicated with, but owing to the time which elapsed before the summons could be given and to the distance, the flames had gained a firm hold by the time the Stafford Brigade arrived on the scene under Chief Officer A. E. Haywood.

A demonstration fire engine, which, by sheer coincidence, happened to be passing the spot at the time, was also brought into use.

UPPER STOREY GUTTED.

Household furniture had hurriedly been removed on to the lawn by a band of helpers, who ran no little danger in their trips in and out of the burning building.

The woodwork of the roof was by now consumed, and the bedrooms were roaring furnaces. Water was available from a pond, supply of water was available from a pond, and from this the hose was got to work, the Stafford firemen being later reinforced in their fight with the flames by their Uttoxeter comrades.

It was not for some hours that the outbreak was got under control. When in the early evening the flames had at last died sullenly down, the farm house presented a sorry picture, all the upper portion having been reduced to ashes. Ground floor rooms, however, were sound.

The exact amount of the damage has not yet been assessed, but it is stated that the house itself will practically have to be rebuilt.

Scores of people returning from the Uttoxeter races watched the firemen fighting the flames. The farm stands on the crest of a hill in the Chartley Estate and is one of the highest buildings in the vicinity.

The upper portions of the buildings destroyed were two bedrooms and a storeroom on the second floor and five bedrooms on the first floor. The ground floor was saved together with the furniture.

Mr. John Poole, postman, of Chartley, said to our representative, "I was sheltering in a coach-house opposite from the heavy storm at the time. The lightning was very vivid and seemed to gather round the farmhouse. Then suddenly the lightning struck the house. It was like a ball of fire and when it struck the roof it exploded, flinging the tiles into the air."

"Flames immediately burst out from the roof. I ran across, and as I approached, Miss Ruth Carter and the girl ran out of the house screaming. On entering the house I discovered the upper portion in flames and dashed off to give the alarm."

"A TERRIBLE STORM."

Mr. Wilfred Carter, the tenant of the farmhouse, told our representative that he was away at the time, and did not hear of the occurrence until he was returning. On arriving at the farm, he found the fire brigades there pumping water on to the blazing building. Everything in the upper portion of the building had been destroyed, and the house rendered uninhabitable. He was now staying with his son, he added.

"It was a terrible storm, and I have never seen the lightning worse," declared Mr. Daniel William Deaville, who said he heard the crash at his home at Grindley, a mile away. "There was a vivid flash," he said, "and then a nasty sounding crack. I took no further notice at the time, but afterwards came to the farm to find it burning like a furnace. Huge flames and clouds of smoke were rising from the roof."

Mr. Deaville pluckily entered the building with the object of saving some of the downstairs furniture, but was driven back by smoke.

Miss Salt, who lives at keeper's lodge opposite the farm, said "I heard what seemed to be an explosion, and on going out saw the roof in flames."

Another son David, who went to school with me, took over the driving at the farm.

I stayed with Mr.Carter for three or four years. He was too generous for his own good. If a man came looking for work he would never turn him away even when he had more staff then he needed. In the end he died in tragic circumstances. Another son Hugh returned from America to run the potato farm. There was another son Wilfred who took over a farm at Sandon Hardwick. After Mr.Carter died I found work with my father Chartley Manor Farm where I helped him with the horses. My father retired in 1955.

When Alfred George Johnson bought the Chartley Estate he appointed Tom Willis as bailiff. Tom's father farmed Chartley Farm as a tenant farmer on the estate. Tom stayed on at his father's farm and offered me a job as a tractor driver driving a three-wheeler Alis Chalmers. Bill Farmer, who lived in one of the cottages near Chartley Hall, was employed to drive the crawler tractor which was used for ploughing and general heavy work. Jim Harmer drove the third tractor, an Alis B. Chartley Barn Farm was an arable and feeding farm. The farm had its own threshing box which was quite unusual as more often than not these were hired from a contractor or another farmer. I drove the tractor for Tom Willis for fourteen years.

I remember the rabbit catcher Jim Patterson visiting the local farms. Jim, who came from Hilderstone, had only one arm. He had a hook on his other arm but he was a very good rabbit-catcher. He used snares to trap rabbits in the fields –farmers didn't like rabbits as they bred quickly like – and destroyed their crops. Jim killed the rabbits and gave them to the farmer who would keep some for his own family and take the rest to Uttoxeter market and sell them. Rabbits were a very popular meat dish in those days.

I met my wife, May Holding, when she worked as a parlour-maid at Chartley Hall for Sir Geoffrey and Lady Congreve. I used to see her walking up and down from the hall. I finally met her at a

dance at the village hall at Stowe. We were married in 1936 at St. John the Baptist Church. At first we lived with my parents at Castle Bank but in 1940 we moved to Mill Cottage where George Massey had lived. He retired in 1939 and went to live at Toll Gate Cottage. George had worked most of his life on the Chartley Estate with his father Robert Massey.

During the war, 1939-1945, agricultural workers were exempt from military service as farming was an essential service providing food for the nation as normal imports were stopped or the ships transporting them were torpedoed by the German U-boats. I stayed on at the farm but became a volunteer fireman in the local Fire Service. I was stationed at the Saracen's Head in Weston. The government needed to build as many airfields as possible to counteract the German's superior airpower. The land near Hixon was probably chosen because of the flat nature of the land around there which stretches for miles. Hixon Airfield was built in 1940-41 on farmland owned by two farmers, Mr. Jackson and Mr. Greaves. The contractors, Trollope and Coles, employed a lot of men to build the airfield. Only one farmhouse had to be knocked down. The airfield workmen used to drink at The Green Man and Bank House in Hixon. A corporal aircraftsman named Spinks from Norwich who was stationed at Hixon married my wife's younger sister Marjorie. Our family moved to Mill Cottage in 1940. Mr. Harvey, a gardener at Chartley Hall, lived there before us with his wife and two children Janet and George. They both attended Stowe by Chartley School at the same time as me.

One day in October 1942 a Wellington bomber took off from the north runway at Hixon. Most of the planes seemed to use that runway and we got used to them flying over our house, Mill Cottage. For some reason the plane failed to gain sufficient height. One of its wings clipped the top of a tree by Toll Gate Cottage just as if had been done with a shears. The plane lost height. It skimmed the hedge of our front garden just missing the tractor I'd left parked there and not ten yards from the house

where my wife May, her younger sister Marjorie and our five year old son Brian were. The plane brought down the electric wires near our house and finally crashed in Thornybank Field at the back of our house and burst into flames. My wife's sister, Marjorie, only sixteen, ran up to the crashed plane to see if she could help. She found one of the crew had been thrown clear. She grabbed hold of him and helped to drag the man as far away as she could from the burning wreckage. She later told me how shocked she was to see blood on the man's face bubbling up because of the intense heat from the flames. I'd been to Stafford for a haircut. I got off the bus – one of Jack Robinson's buses – at The Cock, Stowe by Chartley and went in for half a pint before going home. While I was there someone came running in and said, "It looks as if there's a large fire down at Chartley." I went outside to have a look and I could see a column of black smoke rising from the direction of Chartley. "That's too close to our house for my comfort," I said and ran as fast as I could down Station Road towards Toll Gate Cottage and our house. When I got to Toll Gate Cottage the police were already there and tried to stop me going through but when I told them I lived there and was worried about my wife and young son they let me through. It was such a relief when I found they were alright. The fire tender from Hixon Airfield had just arrived and was driving across trying to get to the burning plane. My wife May was outside and tried to stop the fire tender knowing it was heading straight for the brook but the driver drove straight into it and couldn't move. I got my overalls on and with the tractor which the plane had just missed helped to pull the fire engine out of the brook. There was no way it could get over the brook so in the end it had to round by the road alongside Chartley Hall and across the fields there. Later on sentries were posted to guard the wreckage until it was removed. The soldiers used to sneak down to us for a cup of tea whenever there weren't any officers about. I believe all the crew killed or died later of their injuries.

Another plane from Hixon crashed on the other side of the airfield by Wychdon Lodge on the London Road. Cyril Fradley was awarded a medal for helping to rescue the crew from that crashed plane. At the end of Mill Meadow near Amerton was a big bomb dump for Hixon Airfield. There were concrete roads which are still there and big mounds of earth. There were always sentries guarding the site. During the war German bombers dropped a number of incendiary bombs in Oakwood near Fradswell.

When we first moved to Mill Cottage there were still traces of the brickwork of an old mill that had once probably served Chartley Estate. My father reckoned Chartley Brook, which at one time ran right at the back of our cottage used to be dammed up further back towards the Hall to create waterpower for the mill.

In 1947 and again in 1953 we had very heavy falls of snow and we were snowed in for weeks. When the thaw came our house was flooded because the brook couldn't cope with the volume of water. Once there was a very bad thunderstorm and the then owner of Chartley Hall, Mr. Formby, opened the floodgates at the moat so make sure the moat didn't flood its banks. What he didn't know was that the brook wouldn't be able to cope. The floodwater came right down the front drive of Chartley Hall and washed the drive away. The water came as far down at Toll Gate Cottage. Mr. Formby, incidentally, had come to live at Chartley from the Isle of Man. The brook was later diverted to reduce the possibility of our house flooding during heavy rain. There was a little spring at the back of our house from which we drew water for cooking, washing and drinking. When Mr. Johnson had some new farm workers houses built near us in the 1950's he built a water reservoir in Thornybanks to supply water to the houses. We were put on the water system at the same time. It was a great luxury to be able to turn on a tap and get water especially in winter.

It was about 1956 that Mr. Johnson started a turkey farm on Chartley Estate. He opened up a distribution depot in Newquay

for his frozen turkeys and every Monday I travelled down there with a vanload of turkeys. I can remember taking a delivery of day old turkeys to a Mr. Bernard Matthews in Norfolk soon after he started his own turkey business there. I think it was in 1961 that Mr Johnson asked me if I would like to have a go at building up a round in North Wales instead of sending the turkeys there by rail. I agreed to have a go. He said it would fill the week up and it certainly did that alright. I would spend two days on the Cornwall run and sometimes on the return journey I would have to call at the London Smithfield Market to pick up a load of chickens and guinea fowl from Kievel and Kievel. Other times I would have to go to Cambridge to collect ducks. I was well looked after with meals in restaurants and overnight stays in good hotels. I did quite well on the Wales run and soon had seventy or eighty customers. On the first day I'd go to Welshpool, Dolgellau, Harlech, Portmadoc and Criccieth and on the second day I visit Pwllheli, Abersoch, Nefyn, Morfa Nefyn and Aberdaran. We installed a fridge at Mr Ellis Jones Fish and Chip Shop in Criccieth. The fridge came from Mr Johnson Senior's shooting lodge at Aboyne in Scotland. I kept the fridge stocked up and Mr Jones acted as the agent selling on the days I wasn't available. I never once let the customers down in all those years. I finished working for Mr. Johnson in 1971 when he sold the Chartley Estate. I went to work for Staffordshire Polytechnic at their computer centre on Blackheath Lane, Stafford. I used to go around the secondary schools with computers. A number of years after I retired the polytechnic, like many others throughout the country, was awarded university status and is now known as Staffordshire University.

Sadly my May died on August 27, 1997. We had been married for sixty one years.

MARJORIE JONES' STORY

Eye Witness Account of Plane Crash at Chartley

In 1941 when I was about fifteen I went to live with my sister May and her husband Bert Evans at Mill Cottage, Chartley. Up to then I had lived with my mother in the village of Cristins in Shropshire. All the girls older than me had been called up to do munitions work. I eventually found work at the dairy in Weston. I used to go to the youth club in the village hall at Stowe. We young people used to go around in groups together. We regularly attended the hops or dances at the village hall at Stowe. These were attended by the young men and women from Hixon Airfield nearby and we got to know them quite well. All the young men were in their late teens or early twenties and came from all parts of the world – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and from all over the British Isles. I met my first husband Frank Spinks at one of those dances in the village hall. Frank was regular RAF and had signed on for twelve years before the war. He worked on the radar section at Hixon. There were quite a few people from the London area working there who had been evacuated. They had been brought up in ambulances. Mill Cottage, Chartley was only a mile or so from Hixon airfield so we were quite used to the Wellington bombers taking off and landing at Hixon airfield. They used to come across quite low over the house. One evening in October 1942 I was at home in Mill Cottage with my sister May and her young son Brian. Bert had gone to get a haircut in Stafford and was due back. May and I could hear the sound of an approaching aeroplane but from the noise of its engines it seemed to be very low. May and I went

outside to have a look. We could see the plane in obvious difficulty flying very low and at an angle with one of its wings higher. It came so close to our house that one of the wings clipped the top of the hedge at the front of the house. The other wing sliced through an electric wire which ran across the field between some electricity poles. The bank at the back of our house was quite steep with lots of trees and bushes. The plane went straight into the bank and caught fire. The electric wire was dangling in the brook causing flashes where it went into the water. People came running from all directions. Mrs. Massey, from the Toll House on the main road, came running up. There was a little wooden bridge across the brook allowing the cows to get from one field to the next. Mrs. Massey and I hurried across the bridge to the crashed plane to see if we could help. Some of the crew had managed to get out of the burning plane and were stumbling around. We found one of the men who was in a dreadful state. His face was very badly burnt. I'll never forget it. He was very brave and frantically kept telling us, "Get down. Get down." He probably thought the plane with its full tanks would explode at any moment. Mrs. Massey and I each put one of the airman's arms round our shoulders and helped him slowly over the bridge. An ambulance from the airfield had already arrived and we handed the man over to the ambulance crew. By this time rescue teams had arrived from the airfield and took control. They told us to get well back from the plane. We warned them about the live electric wire in the water. There was a gate into the next field from the road and the rescue services were able to get near to the crashed plane. The flames from the burning plane lit up the surrounding area. I later heard that the man we had helped from the aircraft didn't survive. I remember there were sentries on duty for weeks afterwards near the wrecked plane. I felt so sorry for those brave young men and I shall never forget that night as long as I live.



Billhook in hand, champion hedgecutter Malcolm Johnson prepares for his latest task watched by his proud father, Gilbert. Photo: TED BLACK

Hedgelayer Malcolm's a cut above the rest

HEDGELAYER Malcolm Johnson has proved he's a chip off the old block by becoming the national champion.

Malcolm, of Mill Cottages, Stowe-by-Chartley, near Stafford, has won the coveted title just five years after his father, Gilbert.

At 32 he is believed to be the youngest competitor to win the championship.

The father-of-two proved he is master of the billhook at the event held at Fakenham, Norfolk.

His mother Joan, said: "It took my husband 40 years to win the competition but Malcolm has done it after just 16 years. It's an amazing achievement."

Malcolm took part in his first competition at the age of 16 with no experience

apart from watching his father compete.

"He had never touched a billhook or hedge until that day but he came back with first prize," said Mrs Johnson.

Since then, father and son have been competing against each other in competitions and regularly share the top prizes.

This year Malcolm picked up the Staffordshire championship and won contests at Newcastle and Forest-in-Arden before being crowned supreme champion.

His 63-year-old father of Small Farm, Grindley, won the supreme championship in 1990 at Northamptonshire.

The duo operate a joint business as fencing contractors.



Meadow Farm, Stowe by Chartley. Previously it had been a pub called The Cross Keys. To-day it is a private residence. Just out of the picture on the left were the thatched cottages now a single residence. The Jubilee oak tree is still there but somewhat larger.

One Woman's Story of Wartime Chartley

Managing Chartley Poultry Farm for Alfred Johnson,
The Johnsons of Chartley Hall, The Woolleys of
Meadow Farm, Stowe, A ghostly monk in a house
on Chartley Bank, Wartime Airmen at Hixon Airfield
and a lucky charm, Plane crash at Chartley, Move
to Tixall Lodge as Head Gardener, The Pig Club,
Association with Nicholas Monserrat author of
The Cruel Sea, A ghostly experience at
Tixall Lodge, Move to Drake Hall, Swynnerton,
a hostel for women munitions workers,
Broadcasting on the B.B.C. to the British troops
overseas, Leading the Women's Land Army in
Church Parade through Stafford.

About 1940 I was contacted by Alfred Johnson who owned Chartley Poultry Farm on Chartley Estate. He was looking for someone qualified to run the farm and as I had just finished college a friend of mine gave him my name and address. I was given the job of managing the breeding and growing poultry stock at the farm which had ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl and ordinary poultry. Most of the other women on the farm and Chartley Estate were from the Women's Land Army. Often they had come straight from towns and cities, given a month's training, and sent out to work on a farm as their part in the war effort. After I left Chartley I joined the Women's Land Army myself. It was one way of ensuring I got new working clothes when my own were worn out. Alfred Johnson's father Alfred George Johnson owned Chartley Hall and Estate. Alfred Snr. was said to have married an American millionairess. I was told they purchased Chartley for a quarter of million pounds. I believe they had a daughter who married into the Gibbs

Dentifrice family the well known toothpaste manufacturers. Alfred George Johnson's brother Ernest owned Johnson Potteries in Stoke on Trent. Alfred Johnson, my employer, was known as Sonny Johnson and lived with his wife at Weston.

While I worked on the poultry farm I lodged with the Woolley family at Meadow Farm near The Cock Inn at Stowe. I shared my room with Rita Francis, a Land Girl, who worked in the gardens at Chartley Hall. Before the war Rita had been a mannequin or in to-day's language a model. She was very glamorous and worked at Fenwicks in London. I became great friends with the Woolleys. Rowland Woolley was the agent for the Tory M.P. for Stafford while Mrs. Woolley ran Meadow Farm. Sadly Mr and Mrs Woolley are dead but I still keep in touch with their daughters Kathleen and Dorothy. They are both married and live away from the area. Chartley had a lot of greenhouses and I think some of the food grown was given to hospitals.

While I was working at Chartley I had some ghostly experiences. On a weekend off four of us decided to cycle to Uttoxeter which was about seven miles away. It was a nice run and we'd often cycled there before. There wasn't much traffic on the road in those days and what there was consisted mainly of military convoys. My companions were the Woolley sisters, Dorothy and Kathleen and my friend Rita Francis. We hadn't gone very far along the road to Uttoxeter when we came upon a large deserted house on the right hand side at the top of Chartley Bank. On the spur of the moment we decided to stop off and explore it. The long winding drive was overgrown with weeds and grass waist high. We struggled through with our bikes and finally arrived at the front of a three storied building with a porch at the front door. Boldly we tried the front door and found it was unlocked. We pushed it open cautiously not knowing what we might find on the other side. Inside there was a large hall with a stone-flagged floor and a beautiful huge staircase to a balcony going

round. Curiosity got the better of us and, keeping close together, we started up the wooden staircase. We knew we shouldn't have been there and we didn't know who or what we might encounter but we had this urge to explore the house. I am a bit psychic as we got to the first landing I had an eerie sensation. "This house is haunted by a monk," I said. The next second without knowing how I was standing along on the stone-flagged floor in the hall below. I had absolutely no idea how I'd got there and I hadn't any feeling of being moved. My three friends were shocked and ran down the stairs. We were all terrified and dashed out of the house not bothering to close the door behind us. We grabbed our bikes and rushed down the overgrown drive until we reached the comparative safety of the Stafford-Utttoxeter road. We never returned. I believe the house might have been called Park Hill but I didn't know this at the time.

While we were at Chartley we often saw planes from Hixon airfield going out on bombing raids over Germany. We would count the planes going out at night. Sadly, quite a number did not return. We knew some of the airmen from the airfield and they were all Canadians. The Canadian boys used to come to our dances held in the village halls at Stowe by Chartley and Hixon and we became quite friendly with them. One night we were in the canteen as they were about to fly off on a mission. The Canadian airmen looked very frightened. One airman looked at another, fished a small black toy cat from his pocket and said to the other, "It's your turn to have it to-night, Archie," and handed over the black toy cat to the man. Having handed over the toy the man looked so frightened that I took from my handbag a lucky woollen mouse and handed it to him saying, "Here, you have this for luck." The airman seemed a lot happier at this. There's a story behind the lucky charm which had been given to me by Lord Wrottesley who lived at Wrottesley Hall, Codsall with his brother The Hon. Walter Wrottesley. The brothers did a lot of work for animal charities especially the PDSA. My parents had known

them for years and as I grew up I was invited to their social evenings and dances at Wrottesley Hall. I can't remember why they had given me the woollen mouse in the first place. Sometime after I had given the mouse to the Canadian airman I saw them and told them the story. I never thought anymore about it. One day my landlady in Stowe by Chartley, Mrs. Woolley, told me a large box arrived for me. I wasn't expecting anything but there, indeed, was this huge cardboard box. When I opened the box it was full of paper and I thought someone was playing a practical joke on me. Right at the bottom I found two dear little woolly mice with little leather ears and tails. There was no note or anything but I knew who'd sent them. They must have had great fun packing them up. The Canadian boys came back safely from their bombing mission. Sometime afterwards I saw the mouse I'd given the Canadian airman being playfully thrown round the room on yards of emerald green ribbon and the young airman pretending to dunk the mouse in his friends' drinks. I had a horrible cold feeling. Green is supposed to be unlucky and I'm afraid in this case it proved true. The young Canadian airman did not return from his next op.

One day I went out cycling with a Flight-Lieutenant who was based at Seighford airfield to the west of Stafford. The two of us were cycling along the road past Stowe by Chartley Station when we heard the sound of an approaching plane flying very low and then we saw it overhead and it was indeed very very low. My companion looked very concerned and said to me, "That plane's in trouble. Wait here," and he cycled off at speed towards the spot where the plane seemed to be about to come down. The plane struck some electric wires near a cottage and crashed in field on the other side of the main Stafford-Uttoxeter road where it burst into flames. When help arrived from Hixon airfield my companion the Flight-Lieutenant came back to where he'd left me. We were both quite shocked by the experience. In fact, my companion was himself recovering from his own dreadful experience.

He had been shot down over the sea and had to spend a long time in the water before being rescued. The plane crash must have brought it all back to him. He told me that when he got to the crashed plane some brave people from the nearby cottage had helped to pull some of the crew out.

When the head gardener at Tixall Lodge in Tixall was called up I was transferred there to take his place. Tixall Lodge was a gentleman's residence on the right-hand just before the obelisk at Tixall crossroads as you approach from Stafford along Tixall Road. The house used to be approached by a drive from the Tixall Road but there is now a long drive to house from Milford Road. Mr. Rowland the owner of the Universal Grinding Wheel Company, Stafford, lived at Tixall Lodge with his wife and family and three dogs. I looked after the greenhouses where grapes – black and white, peaches, nectarines and figs were grown in one greenhouse and tomatoes and cucumbers in the other. The Rowlands also had two pigs with one for the house and one for the government and about thirty hens. One of my jobs was to allocate the rations for the village Pig Club. In those days food for eighty pigs was delivered to the farm and the locals would then call there to collect their ration. It was customary for people to have one pig for themselves and one for the government.

I had nice rooms at Tixall Lodge and I had the Rowland's daughter's private sitting room for my use until she got bombed out in Liverpool. The wall of the sitting room were lined with her husband's books. Nicholas was a writer and had written a stack of romantic type novels. He wrote a book about the sea entitled, "Life on a Corvette," which was written during the period I worked at Tixall Lodge. But no doubt the book for which Nicholas Monsarrat will be most remembered was "The Cruel Sea," which became a best seller and was made into a film with Jack Hawkins in the starring role. The Rowlands had a daily cook-housekeeper and it was her husband who had been called up.

One evening when the Rowlands were away and the maids had gone off for a few hours I was alone in the house with family's three dogs. I was quietly reading when suddenly all three dogs started to bark furiously. I was quite scared thinking there might be burglars and decided I had to investigate. When I opened the door of the lounge the dogs ran out into the hall and up the staircase with me following as fast as I could. The dogs abruptly stopped on the main landing and I found them snarling and growling at a blank wall. The hairs on the coat of Joe the alsatian stood out like bristles on a brush. I had quite a job to get the dogs away from the wall.

Later in the war I was sent to Drake Hall, Swynnerton near Eccleshall to do light work only as I'd injured my back while trying to help a horse. Drake Hall wasn't a women's prison then. During the war it was used as hostel for thousands of women munitions workers. While I was there I decided to rear ducks, geese and turkeys using the left-overs and waste from the camp canteen and it was very successful. With me at Drake Hall was a girl named Sylvia Bailey who was wonderful with playing cards. The two of us used to tell our friends fortunes for fun but word soon got round and there were queues of up to fifty girls a night outside the common room waiting for us to tell them something. In the end I refused to do anymore fortune-telling. While I was there I was asked to do a short BBC radio broadcast to the British troops overseas to reassure them that their wives and girlfriends were being well looked after at Drake Hall.

I think it was about 1943 that about 400 members of the Women's Land Army from all over Staffordshire took part in a Church Parade through Stafford led by the Women's Royal Air Force Band. I was asked to take the salute in front of the Town Hall.

Joan Durose The Story of a Land Girl.

Lured from London to Staffordshire by war poster for Land Girls, Taking a flock of sheep round Gailey roundabout on A5, First Land Girl at Stowe by Chartley, Life as a Land Girl on Mr.Johnson's Poultry Farm at Chartley, Personal Tragedy, Love and Marriage, Life with the Durose family of Stowe, Attacked by a sheep at Chartley Bank, Hixon Airfield and plane crashes at Chartley and Wychdon Lodge, Family Life at Chartley and Grindley, Restoration work on Chartley Castle.

My name is Joan Durose. It was as Joan English, aged eighteen years, that I first came to live in Stowe by Chartley. I came as a Land Girl to work for Mr.Alfred Johnson at Chartley Poultry Farm. His father Mr.Alfred G.Johnson had only recently purchased Chartley Hall and Estate with his American wife. Mrs.Johnson, whose maiden name was Boot, had a sister who married Alfred G.Johnson's brother and so you had two brothers married to two sisters. In the summer of 1938 I was living in Shepherd's Bush in London with my parents and learning how to do hand embroidery on ladies' dresses and on wedding dresses at Liberty House, Regent Street, London. We were all still hoping there wouldn't be a war with Germany. I saw an advert in a newspaper asking for recruits to the Women's Land Army – the WLA. **“Spend a fortnight of your holiday in the country,”** it said. Being very much a country-lover I applied, had a successful interview and was accepted. I didn't hear anymore until the war had started. Towards the end of September 1939 I received a letter requesting me to go to Rodbaston Farm Institute, Penkridge, Staffordshire to train to become a member of the Women's Land Army. There were quite a few of us from London, single girls as well as married women, and



Joan English in her Land Army uniform.

mostly very nice. We caught the train from Euston and got off at Penkridge. At Rodbaston we were issued with warm clothes and literally went back to school for eight weeks. We learned all about poultry rearing, pig keeping and herd management. Sometimes we learned the hard way. On one occasion a group of us were given the task of taking a flock of sheep round the Gailey roundabout on the A5 and along to a nearby farm. It was quite a challenge. Can you imagine trying to repeat the exercise to-day? I quite liked milking by hand. The milking machines frightened me and the teat cups kept falling off the cows whenever I tried to get them to work. Cutting kale and pulling sugar beet in the fields was hard work but it was also fun working together and chatting to each other. Most of the time I was with a girl, Vera Corderey, who was older than me and eventually we became good friends. We both enjoyed working with poultry. Just before we finished our training we were asked if any of us would like a job in poultry as a Mr. Johnson of Chartley was looking for two girls to work at his poultry farm. Vera and I volunteered. We thought we were lucky as not many farmers seemed to want Land Girls at that time.

It was on January 8, 1940 that I first arrived in Stowe by Chartley where I was given lodgings with Mrs. Woolley of Meadow Farm. My friend Vera Corderey, who like me had gone home to London for Christmas, had missed the train in London back to Stafford and so I became the very first Land Girl to arrive in the village. We started work every morning at seven come rain, hail or sunshine. In the evening it was long walk home when we were tired after a long day's work. We often had sore feet and blisters from wearing heavy shoes and wellingtons. When we had worked for a whole month without a day off Vera and I decided to ask Mr. Johnson for a day off so we could go and see the other Land Girls at the college in Penkridge. Mr. Johnson readily agreed. We took the bus into Stafford where we caught another bus to

Penkridge and from there we walked to Rodbaston Institute. While we were there it started snowing. It was February. We caught the next Stafford bus so that we could get back to Chartley before it became too bad. The roads back to Stafford weren't too bad but it was a different story when we got to Stafford and Pitcher Bank where we were supposed to catch the Green Bus back to Stowe by Chartley. All the buses had been cancelled because of the heavy snow. We had no choice but to walk. Vera and I trudged the seven miles back through the snow slipping and sliding down Weston Bank to Weston. We wanted desperately to stop and rest but we urged one another on. It was very lonely out there on the snow-covered roads and the silence, apart from the sound of our crunching footsteps, was quite awesome. It was hours before we got back home and we were both utterly exhausted. Next morning we were up at seven and back to work. For weeks afterwards the snow lay on the ground and froze and the roads were practically impassable. On a number of occasions, Mr. Johnson who lived in Stone, couldn't get to Chartley in his car because the roads were so bad. It was down to Vera and I to keep the poultry farm going with the manager Dennis and a little boy called Jimmy. Incredibly, there followed the most beautiful spring and summer you could possibly imagine.

We were very isolated at Chartley. I don't think the Stafford WLA office was very organised at first and our clothes got quite ragged. One day a very nice lady came to visit us to see how we were doing. She told us how to go about getting more land army uniforms to work in. The good lady was a local farmer's wife, Mrs. Earp and she has stayed in my life ever since. When we first arrived in Stowe by Chartley we two land girls were very much a curiosity in the village and we sometimes felt the locals were a bit dubious about us. Mrs. Turner ran the village Post Office. One day while Vera and I were doing some shopping there her little five year old

son, John, came into the shop making a noise shouting something to his mother. Mrs. Turner said to him, "Don't make so much noise, John, there are some ladies in the shop." John's instant reply was, "They're not ladies. They're land girls." However we soon settled into village life and were accepted once people got to know us. Mrs. Woolley helped by sending us out to deliver the Parish Magazine to all the houses and in that way we got to know more people. On a Wednesday evening we used to go to the 'Library' which consisted of two boxes of books in the billiards room in the village hall. I suppose the main library in Stafford organised the books to be changed every month or so. However, for us it was an opportunity to meet other young people. Every so often dances were held in the village hall and they were quite fun. We used to go cycling around the countryside. I had to learn to cycle first. We would go for long walks from Stowe to Weston, on to Hixon and back to Stowe. It was a very healthy life. Trains were still running along the Stafford-Utttoxeter railway line close to Meadow Farm. It was good to hear them. There were only freight trains then but I was told it had been a very busy line before the war. A lot of people used the line to go to Stafford or Utttoxeter and even on to Derby. I believe that Stowe By Chartley Station once won a prize for the Best Kept Station. In 1940 there still was a Stationmaster living in the Station Master's House near the station. I think he was there until 1945.

We stayed in our lodgings with Mrs. Woolley at Meadow Farm for quite a while. All of us who worked at Chartley Poultry Farm used to take it in turn to lock up the farm at night but Vera and I chose to do it together. In the summer the powers that be decided that we'd all have Double Summer Time to give those working on the land longer daylight hours to work and to collect in the harvests. Unfortunately the hens and ducks thought it didn't apply to them and when it was their normal time for bed they just didn't want to go. It was

quite a long job locking up as there were a lot of things to do especially in the summer. You had to close all the windows in the chick intensive sheds, close the pop holes to the pens once the hens had gone in. As the pens were scattered over a wide area it was usually quite late when we got back home. One evening when it was once again our turn to lock up Mrs.Woolley said she would like to come with us for the walk. She came with us and helped us with the locking up. When we got back she told us she hadn't believed we could possibly be out all that length of time just locking up the poultry. She said she had really been surprised.

One night it was a lovely warm summer's evening so we went a little earlier than usual to lock up. The ducks just didn't want to know. We had the most awful time trying to get them to go into the pens. As soon as we had coaxed them off one pond they went straight onto the other pond on the other side of the lane. Tempers were not very good that night. Next day Mr.Johnson Snr. told us he had heard our shouting up at the Hall. He laughed about it, thank goodness. Needless to say we didn't try to go too early again.

There were quite a number of people employed at Chartley. Some of the people I remember are Mr. Gunn the chauffeur, Mr. Tinker who was head gardener, Mr. Lockley who kept the vegetable garden, Matt Hodgetts who used to cut the lawns and do all sorts of other jobs around the Hall and gardens. There were about five men working on the estate under Mr.Griffiths who told me he had lived at Ealing in London not far from where my home was. I suppose there were about six men on the Home Farm and two gamekeepers for the estate. There were six maids at the Hall. Mr.& Mrs. Johnson gave employment to a lot of people. There were well liked and did a lot for the church and the village.

In August 1940 my mother came to say with me at Mrs.Woolley's and we had a really lovely time together. In February 1941 I received the terrible news that my mother had died from a heart problem. I was in very low spirits for


some time afterwards. However life had to go on and I occupied myself with tending the poultry and the incubators which had to be heated with paraffin oil lamps. The lamps had to be tended to every day trimming the wicks and refilling the lamps. We also helped out on the Home Farm during the potato picking season and during harvest time and so time went on.

While we were still staying at Mrs.Woolley's Vera received the bad news that her mother had been bombed out of her home in London. When Mr.Johnson heard about this he very kindly offered Vera and I the chance to stay at a bungalow on the estate on condition that Vera's mother, Mrs.Corderey, came to look after us. It was agreed and we all lived there together including Vera's two sisters. We were now virtually living on the job but it was quite nice really and I had a little room to myself. Soon after, Mrs.Woolley took in a new lodger at Meadow Farm a Miss Iris Taylor, who also worked at the poultry farm. In due course, my friend Vera Corderey met and married Freddie, a soldier from one of the nearby camps. There were more land girls at Chartley by this time so we weren't on our own anymore. Both Dennis, the poultry farm manager, and the boy Jimmy had gone – Dennis had been called up. Came the time when Vera and Freddie started a family so they left the area. Meanwhile Vera's mother Mrs.Corderey left with them. The bungalow was no longer suitable and so I needed new accommodation. Mr.Johnson had a man who worked for him who we knew only by his first name Tom. Tom did the jobs on Chartley Estate like hedging, fencing and ditching. Mr.Johnson asked Tom if there was any room at his home the Old Vicarage in Stowe. Without hesitation Tom said there was. It was in this way I came to live with the Durose family. The Old Vicarage was on the opposite side of Station Road to Stowe by Chartley Railway Station and was the last house on the right hand side as you approached the railway bridge from Chartley. Mrs.Durose,



**Joan English with the Corderey family circa 1943.
Left to right: Rose Corderey, her married sister, Ethel,
Mrs.Corderey, Vera Corderey, Joan English,
Ethel's children.**

S T A F F O R D S H I R E



Name Joan Evelyn English No. 19088

You are now a member of the Women's Land Army, enrolled
in the fourth line of Defence, and equally important with
His Majesty's Fighting Services.
Put your whole heart into your work and do your best to help
your country.
It is by your work, and by the way you conduct yourself when
off duty, that the Women's Land Army will be judged by the
world.
Best wishes and good luck.

Date Sept. 1939 T. M. Harris
Chairman

Tom's wife made me most welcome even though she already had seven people to feed and clean for – four of her own and three land girls. I shared a bedroom with an Irish girl, Bridie Collins. At first, I had a difficult job to understand her accent. We became great friends and eventually we became sisters-in-law. The Old Vicarage was a small farm with six milking cows, some pigs, lots of hens and with eight of us to look after and with only help with the washing and ironing Mrs.Durose certainly did her bit for the war effort.

Mr. and Mrs. Durose had three sons Cyril John or Sid, Reg and Dennis. Dennis was still at school in the village when I went to live with the them. I already knew Reg in passing as he worked on Chartley Estate. He was away with the 8th Army. Practically all the men from Stowe by Chartley worked on the estate and Vera and I used to walk home with them when we lodged at Mrs.Woolley's. The other son Sid was working at 16 MU Stafford and at other RAF places in Shropshire so we didn't see a lot of him. The Durose home was a very happy one. While we were there it was pig-killing time. We Land Girls were asked to hold the pig while it was being killed. It wasn't a very nice experience even though the pig had been stunned beforehand but the resulting meat, bacon, ham, black puddings, savoury ducks and other dishes were very nice indeed. These were all shared with other relatives living around who returned the favour when it was their turn to kill a pig. This was certainly a new experience for me. The Duroses used to grow quite a lot of vegetables and as there were no freezers in those days vegetables like beans were salted down in jars and onions were pickled to preserve the for use in the winter and spring. When there were more beans than we could use Mrs.Durose took them to the market in Uttoxeter on a Wednesday. One Tuesday evening Mrs.Durose asked me to go down the field with her to help her pick some beans. When I got there her son Sid was already there picking them. I think that was the first time



Back: Joan English, Mabel Gammon

Seated: Bridie Collins, Dorothy Workman, Anna Ferneyhough



Sid and I actually spoke to each other apart from saying 'Hello' when we happened to pass each other.

Life certainly took on new meaning from that moment. Although we were both very busy each with our own work we found the time to go for walks together and then to dances in the village. In 1943 Sid Durose and I married in the village church and went to live in Park Hill Cottage at the top of Chartley Bank just off the Stafford-Utttoxeter road. We lived there for ten good years. During the first two years I was on my own a lot as Sid had had to go first to Coventry and then to London on bomb damage repair work. It was a very worrying time with bomb raids still taking place there. Fortunately, Sid was able to stay with my father which was better than staying in a barracks. A funny incident happened to Sid before the war and before I knew him, of course. He was cycling home from Utttoxeter late at night and was coming down Castle Bank near Chartley Castle which was supposed to be haunted. The road was very narrow at this part and had a S-bend in it. He was keeping well to the left of the road when something or somebody jumped right on top of him. He fell off his bike with the thing on top of him. The thing then ran off. Sid got the fright of his life and believed the devil had got him but it was only a sheep that either fell or jumped from the bank which at that time was very high. He didn't think it was funny at the time.

I had my own less exciting experience on one of the many bends on the Stafford-Utttoxeter road. Mr. Johnson had been on his way back to the poultry farm with a lorry load of corn in sacks for the birds when as he was coming round one of the bad bends between Amerton and Chartley one of the sacks fell off and burst in the road. He stopped and gathered up what he could into the sack but there was a lot of corn left spilt over the road. When he got back he sent me out in a little green van that we normally used on the poultry farm. While I was sweeping up the corn not a single vehicle came along the

road and I was very grateful for that. How different the road is to-day and the volume of traffic using it. It is also a lot straighter but that has increased the speed of vehicles.

Hixon aerodrome was built sometime after I came to live in Stowe by Chartley its boundary was in Stowe. While the airfield was being built they had to take away at least three farms but it was quite exciting and it boosted the population of the area. I remember a lovely house off Hixon Lane at Stowe belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Sampson having to come down because it was in line with the flight path of the runway. We thought it was such a shame and being young didn't think of the danger the house would be to a plane if they it didn't manage to take off properly. Sid and I used to walk along Bridge Lane and stand watching the planes taking off over our heads. It was really thrilling and we had no thought of the danger of it. The airfield made a difference to the attendance at the dances held in Stowe village hall. It really did get quite crowded if the weather was cold outside and sometimes the condensation inside was such that it dripped off the ceiling like spots of rain. The airmen were mostly quite young especially the pilots and crews. We thought they went on operations from Hixon but I was told later it was a training airfield as well. There were two plane crashes that I know about. One was at Chartley just by Mill Cottage but that happened when Sid and I were away. But Sid's parents Mr. and Mrs. Durose rushed out to see if they could help. They left the outside door open creating a draft which the oil lamp didn't like making it smoke and by the time they returned the whole room was black. That happened sometimes with the incubator lamps at the poultry farm and it took some cleaning up. Another crash occurred near the railway crossing gates at New Road, Hixon which at that time were manually operated. Sid who was on duty with the National Fire Service attended the crash but all he could tell me about it was that

the woman who was the crossing keeper came out in her nightdress.

One of Sid's uncles worked at Hixon Camp and he sometimes got us a ticket to a dance or social evening on the camp which we enjoyed. They were hectic times. We used to keep pigs and we collected the swill from the camp in dustbins. We used to boil up the swill in an old boiler in the yard at Park Hill. Many a time we recovered plates that had accidentally been thrown away with the waste food. The waste from the camp dining rooms supplemented the small amount of meal we were allowed from the Ministry of Food. I can't remember when the R.A.F. finally left Hixon but they were there for quite a while after the war.

On V.E. night everyone was overjoyed that the war was over, at least in Europe. I don't know how we all knew but we all went to a huge bonfire in Mr Wilmot Martin's field at Hixon. He was known as the Staffordshire 'Harry Lauder' because of the way he dressed in a Scottish kilt and impersonated Harry Lauder's singing in concerts up and down Staffordshire to raise money for wounded soldiers in hospital. We were all there from both villages, Hixon and Stowe, to celebrate. Someone from Hixon Camp brought along some Very Lights and so we had a 'firework' display as well. It was a very joyous time. In 1946 we had our first child Valerie.

Near us at Park Hill Cottage, Chartley Bank was a large house known as Park Hill. It was empty for most of the time we lived near it. A family named Nevus had lived there for a short while and before that a Mr.Nuttall had lived there. He had died before I came to live in the area and my husband Sid informed of his situation. Apparently, he was a very large man but confined to a wheelchair which was pushed by a very small man Mr.Lindsey. Every Sunday, it seems, they attended the parish church in Stowe by Chartley with Mr.Lindsey having to push the much bigger man all the way there from the top of Chartley Bank and there wasn't a pavement. Then, after the service he had to push him in his wheelchair all the

way back up that steep winding hill. Sid said it made a funny sight but thought what a tremendous effort it must have been for poor Mr.Lindsey. I pushed a pram up and down that hill hundreds of times with one or two babies inside and I'm sure it was a lot lighter than an old-fashioned wheelchair. Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey, Sid told me, used to live in our cottage and they would often come to visit us and look around. They must have enjoyed living there. Park Hill was bought by Mr.Goodwin, a local man, who had returned from living in Canada. He had the old house demolished and had a bungalow built on the site. My husband Sid and his friend Eric built it for him. It was quite an undertaking at the time what with building materials being so scarce after the war.

At Park Hill Cottage we had no running water and had to get all our water from a hand pump across the yard. It wasn't a very enjoyable task in winter. There was no mains sewerage and we had to use an outside toilet. There was no electricity either so any hot water we needed for baths, washing up or making hot drinks had to be boiled in a large kettle on the range in the kitchen. If I wanted to do the ironing I had to use heating irons which had to be placed in front of the open range fire to get hot. The range, which burned coal or wood, was also used for all our cooking. We had the use of the yard and the stable buildings around it and Sid had his workshop there. The stables had probably been part of Park Hill years ago. Sid fixed us up with an electrical supply using a Petter diesel engine and a row of batteries. The batteries topped up were sufficient to run the electric lights in the house but if I wanted to do any ironing we had to have the large engine running while I did it. Ironing was very pleasurable with a nice clean electric iron. An electrician, who had a little shop in Uttoxeter, adapted a mains electric iron for me so that it could operate on the electricity supplied by the diesel engine.

After I was married and living at Park Hill Cottage I still worked for Mr.Johnson at his poultry farm. One night after I'd gone to bed, I can't remember what time it was, I suddenly woke up and realised it had been my turn that night to lock up the hens and ducks and I hadn't done it. I dressed very quickly, got on my bike and pedalled furiously down to the poultry farm. What a to-do I had in the dark trying to shut all the windows of the intensive sheds and I didn't dare leave them open because of the hundreds of little chicks in them. All the windows were held up by chains so there was a good deal of chain rattling after midnight around Chartley Hall that night. It was dark and I couldn't bring myself to go to the top pens where the ducks were so I chanced it and went back home. Next morning, besides all my normal duties, I had to go round and collect all the eggs the ducks had laid over the fields. Wasn't I lucky that Mr.Fox wasn't around that night. I didn't forget to lock up again. I worked on the poultry farm for four and half years in all.

We were so happy living at Park Hill Cottage but by this time we had two more children, John born in 1948 and Arthur born in 1949 and we were finding it a bit small. About 1953 Mr.A.G.Johnson, my old employer's father, asked my husband Sid if he would be the estate manager on the Chartley Estate and offered him a new house with all amenities. Mr.Johnson had built a number of houses for his workers in a field opposite Station Road not very far from Stowe by Chartley. For us these would be much nearer the village school. Valerie now seven years had been travelling up and down to the school on the old faithful Green Bus for two years. It was getting time for John to go to school so we accepted Mr.Johnson's offer and moved to Mill Cottages. Our children could now walk to school and at last they would have the company of other children nearby. The sad part for me was that my dear mother-in-law Mrs.Durose had passed away not long before. When Mill Cottages were being built by Mr.Johnson she had said to me, "I wish you were coming

to live in one of those cottages.” So in the spring of 1953 we all started a different way of living. We had mains electricity, water on tap and an inside toilet. In 1955 I had my fourth baby, Gillian, so we had the ideal family, two boys and two girls, each of them having brothers and sisters.

We had been in Mill Cottages for thirteen years when we had the opportunity to buy our own home Yew Tree Cottage at Grindley, near Uttoxeter and so it was in 1966 we moved back up the road. Sid continued to work at Chartley until his employer Mr.A.G.Johnson died. His son, Mr.Alfred Johnson who had been my wartime employer on the poultry farm, didn't want to keep on the estate and eventually it was sold to Lord Shrewsbury. I have many fond memories of Chartley. The Castle Field was the scene of many happy Stowe/Hixon Shows while we lived at Chartley. It was a lovely field with a lot more trees in it than there are to-day. A gale blew down quite a few trees and I think quite a few were felled around the ruined castle. One year the show would be held at Chartley, the next in Hixon as far as I can remember. Nearly everyone in both villages helped and lots of people came to the show from the villages and the surrounding area. I think in those days people got together more often and therefore knew more people. I used to go to Uttoxeter market most Wednesday mornings. The bus was always crowded and the noise from people in the bus talking to each other about the week's happenings was quite extraordinary. Nearly everybody knew each other all along the route. Now that we have cars and travel separately that cosy feeling has gone. The ruins of Chartley Castle were much larger when I first arrived in the area in 1940. The castle was always open to the public then. I suppose, the fact that lots of people were scrambling over it, the affect of all sorts of weather over fifty years and vandalism all contributed to parts of the castle falling down. Recently, I believe the present owner, Mr.Johnson and a nephew of the original Johnsons of

Chartley Hall, paid for preservation work to be carried out on the castle.

Sadly Bridie and her husband Reg Durose died some years ago and my own dear husband Sid Durose died on September 16, 1981 after a long illness. He is buried in the graveyard at St.Lawrence Church, Bramshall in the family plot.



Group of Land Girls taken in 1943 on the steps of Stafford Borough Hall- now the Gatehouse Theatre -when they were presented with their arm bands by a Mrs.Harris for three years service with the Land Army. Joan English in on the bottom right of the photo in front of the lady with the hat.

We've come to Station Road and the turning for Stowe by Chartley. Before going on to Stowe we'll stop to hear the story of Sarah Horobin who lived here with her parents. Her father Bob Massey worked on the Chartley Estate.



The old Toll House on the Stafford – Uttoxeter road by the turning for Stowe. The Massey family lived here and Mrs. Massey ran a shop from the front room. In the days before motorised vehicles a toll was paid here to the Toll Keeper by all road users and included people on foot, carts, wagons and animals.

SARAH HOROBIN'S STORY

Chartley Hall and General Congreve;
living at the Old Toll House, Chartley;
the old mail coach; the toll gate;
feeding the tramps and
feeding the Wild Cattle of Chartley;
the Smithy on Dimmock's Lane, Amerton;
under-parlour maid for the Congreves;
the moat round Chartley Hall;
the two swans George and Mary, the tragic
drowning there, skating on the ice;
Park Hill House, the General's Farmhouse;
under-parlour maid for Lord and Lady Balfour;
the building of Hixon Airfield.

My name is Sarah Horobin (nee Massey). I was born on 24 April 1902 at a small-holding near Stowe by Chartley.

My parents Robert James "Bob" Massey and Sarah Massey (nee Bailey) had a small-holding at The Lea. My father's parents had a farm at Ipstones. I had five brothers Jim, George, Jack, Harry and Uriah or "Riley" as we called him, and one sister Jane who was older than me.

My father obtained work as a foreman on Chartley Estate with General Sir Walter Congreve of Chartley Hall and we moved to the Old Toll House on the Stafford - Uttoxeter road by the corner with Station Road. My father was a wheelwright and carpenter by trade. He had a workshop near the Hall and he repaired field gates, doors, fences, wheels - which of course were all wooden in those days. He did all the repairs on the Chartley Estate. When my father first worked on the estate he used to walk from The Lea through Chartley Moss to get to Chartley Hall.

My sister Jane told me that our parents could remember the old mail coach drawn by a team of horses travelling between Stafford and Uttoxeter. I can remember an old toll board in a shed at our house listing all the tolls. I think it was a penny for an animal to go through the gate. There used to be a gate across the road by the Old Toll House and another gate by Amerton Turn further on towards Stafford at Bridge Lane. Before we moved into the Toll House it had been lived in by quite a few people before us - a policeman lived there and before that the Station Master for Stowe by Chartley.

I can remember tramps - men and women - calling at our house on their way to the Workhouse at Stafford or Uttoxeter. They carried tin cans with a wire handle over the top and asked for tea and a bit of bread. Sometimes my father allowed them to sleep in the cow shed but first he'd take all their matches off them in case they caused a fire in the shed.

I went to school at Stowe by Chartley where my teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Daniel. Mrs. Daniel taught infants and her husband Mr. Daniel, the Headmaster, taught the older pupils. Mrs. Daniel was very strict. She had a cane but never used it, at least not on me. I can remember we had a coal stove to heat the classroom in winter.

Sam Arnold from The Round House, Fradswell - so called because it was round - used to feed the Chartley Wild Cattle every morning. When he was off my father had the job of feeding them and counting them. I often went with him.

On Market days Tommy Atkins would drive herds of cattle from Bagshaws Cattle Market in Uttoxeter along the main road for the farmers who had bought them there. Tommy often used to go for a drink. When he went on a binge he would sleep out in the bins or sheds.



Mr. Sam Arnold, a member of a well-known Fradswell family with the last of the Chartley Wild Cattle. The trees on the skyline in Chartley Park were a 'honeymoon planting' for the wedding of the late Sir Geoffrey Congreve – one tree for each guest at the wedding.

Newsletter & Guardian Friday January 20th 1967.

There was a moat surrounding Chartley Hall with three bridges across it. I can remember two swans in the moat. They came from the River Thames near London and were called George and Mary after the King and Queen at the time. We used to feed them from the kitchen window which overlooked the moat. They used to catch the cygnets with a net and take them away otherwise their parents would attack them.

I heard a story about a woman who arrived at Stowe by Chartley Station on the 9 o'clock train from Uttoxeter. She got off and walked down the road and up to Chartley Hall. She didn't go up the main drive but by a way that was called Beggars' Walk which took you right round the outside of the moat. The lady then threw herself into the moat and was drowned. I believe her name was Orme.

Sometimes in winter the moat froze over and if the Congreves were away we would skate and slide on the ice.

There was a large cellar at Chartley Hall and in it was stored the wine and also the coal. The coal used to be brought up to the various floors in a hand-operated lift. Also in the cellar was a machine for cleaning the knives. It was in the cellar that all the shoes were polished.

Three of us shared a bedroom. We had wonderful views of the countryside from the window.

The Hall had its own acetelyne gas for lighting. We didn't have any candles or lamps like at home.

The Armetts lived at Chartley Manor further up the road towards Uttoxeter.

Nuttals lived at Park Hill House on Park Hill nearby. It had a wall running right round it. Ernest Nuttall, the son, managed the Chartley Estate for the General.

In those days farmers would travel to the Market at Uttoxeter or Stone in a pony and trap.

The vicar in those days was the Rev. Coles. Every Sunday morning and afternoon I went to Sunday School. Once a year we would have a picnic on the lawns of the vicarage and Mrs. Coles would serve biscuits and lemonade.

Bill Johnson was the blacksmith. He lived with his family in a house on the main road at Amerton. The Smithy was not far from the house on the corner with Dimmock's Lane. There was a post box in the wall of the Smithy. There is still a post box on the corner of Dimmock's Lane.

Next door to the Johnsons lived the Collier family in the black and white cottage. He was a sadler and used to make harnesses. The Colliers had two children Arthur and May.

I remember two boys Norman and Percy Fielding who went to school with me. The Fieldings farmed at Amerton Farm which was part of the Chartley Estate.

Mr. Leadbetter kept the Plough Inn opposite Amerton Farm. The Cock Inn at Stowe was kept by the Robinsons.

I left school at fourteen but didn't start work until I was sixteen when I went to work for the Congreves at Chartley Hall as an under-parlour maid. General Sir Walter Congreve had just sacked his butler who had been going into the cellar and helping himself to the General's drinks. When I started there were two Irish girls, Maggie and Hannah Doyle, working there - Maggie worked as Cook and her sister Hannah as a Lady's Maid. Later one of their nieces Margaret or "Maggie" Byrne obtained employment as under-house maid to the Congreves. Maggie was later to marry my brother George Massey. My job as under-parlour maid was to wait on the tables and clean the silver. I was up at six every day. I was paid 5/- (25p) a week.

I can remember General Congreve having a new house built further on the road to Uttoxeter. It was up on a hill and had a large pool nearby. It might have been a fish pond. I believe it's called the General's Farmhouse. The main road no longer goes past it but runs along the bottom of the hill. Goodwins the wine merchants from Uttoxeter lived in the house opposite the General's Farmhouse.

I stayed with the Congreves for six years. I was then engaged as an under-parlour maid and servant for Lord and Lady Balfour at their home in Wolseley Road, Rugeley. They had two sons Gilbert and Michael.

When they retired to live in Oxford I went with them. I was only with them for about four years when unfortunately my mother Sarah Massey became very ill with goitre. She was unable to lift heavy things and couldn't do any work. I came home and looked after her. She died at the age of sixty seven. I never returned to paid work.

When my father retired I looked after him. One day he suffered a bad stroke and after that he was never the same. We had to keep him in a locked room with bars on the window as he used to smash things up and try and get out of the window. Eventually he had to be put in Coton Hill Hospital in Stafford for the mentally ill. We used to visit him but in the end we were asked not to see him as he became very disturbed after our visits.

We used to get the train from Stowe by Chartley to Stafford to shop there. There were no buses in those days. Most local farmers had a pony and trap. They would go to the Markets in the pony and trap and their wives would go with them to shop.

I met my husband George Horobin in Hixon. We married in July 1927 at Stowe Church where I had been baptised. We had one son Cyril, two grand-children Katherine and Gaynor and one great grand-child Christopher Bromiley.

My husband George was a lorry driver for the Council for thirty years. He died in 1974.

During the Second World War I can remember the airfield being built at Hixon. I used to cook for the men responsible for overseeing the building of the airfield. Myself and another woman used to cook their meals in a farmhouse near the site. When the airfield was opened we could hear the planes revving up and we would see them taking off for Germany. The planes used to take off every night at twelve o'clock.

I now live in High Meadows Rest Home, Great Haywood. I only came to live here as I had to have an operation on my heart. With the help of family I still visit my friends.

My niece Brenda Smith, my brother George's daughter lives locally and works part-time at Amerton Farm not far from our old home.

Sarah's niece Brenda Smith tells her story next. Her father, George Massey, worked on the estate and it was there he met Brenda's mother Margaret Byrne who was a maid at Chartley Hall under Major William Congreve. Brenda has worked at Amerton Farm for many years and must have served thousands of ice creams in that time including a few to our family.

BRENDA SMITH'S STORY

My parents working for the Congreves;
living at Mill Cottage; Amerton Brook;
catching minnows at the back door;
school days at Stowe;
cycling to school in Stafford;
the Green Bus Company; Amerton Farm.

My name is Brenda Smith (nee Massey). I was born in the first cottage on the right in Station Road, Stowe by Chartley as you go towards the village.

My father George Massey worked on the Chartley Estate for the Congreves as his father, my grandfather Bob Massey did. During the First World War my dad was in the army. He was wounded when he was hit in the leg by shrapnel. My father and mother met while they were working on the Chartley Estate.

My mother Margaret Byrne worked at Chartley Hall, as did my aunt Sarah Massey, married name Horobin. My mother's two Irish aunts Maggie and Hannah Doyle also worked at the Hall for Major William Congreve and my mother came over from Ireland to work for him. Later they worked for Sir Geoffrey Congreve.

I have one brother Bernard who is younger than me. We lived at Mill Cottage on the Chartley Estate just across the main road from the Old Toll House. Amerton Brook ran past the back door. As children we used to catch minnows in the brook. There was a spring by the back door. Later I believe the stream was diverted away from the cottage.

My brother and I went to Stowe School where the headmaster was Mr. Prince. When we finished our schooling there we went to St. John's School in Great Haywood and later we went to St. Patrick's School in Stafford.

At first three or four of us would cycle to Stafford. We had to get off our bikes at Weston Bank and walk as the hill was so steep.

There were no passenger trains on the Stafford - Uttoxeter line. They had stopped in 1939.

When the Green Bus Company started its service between Stafford and Uttoxeter we were able to catch the bus every day.

At the beginning of the Second World War we moved to Toll Gate House. We later moved to Hixon.

I've been working at Amerton Farm for about ten years and have seen many changes there and on the road over the years. Most recently I've worked on the ice cream counter at the farm.

I married Bill Smith in 1950 at Great Haywood. We live in Hixon.

On Friday March 11, 1983 at 2.58 p.m. a male driver aged 62 and a male driver aged 37 were killed when their goods vehicles collided on the A518 between Station Road and Bridge Lane.

Our next story is from Allan Barnes who lives just up Station Road on the road to Stowe. His father Sydney used to drive one of the old Green Buses on the Stafford - Uttoxeter route.

ALLAN BARNES' STORY

Whieldons Bus Company;
walking along the old railway line;
aeroplane crash near Chartley Moss;
Robin Hood and Chartley; Chartley village;
Chartley Cattle; accidents on bad bend at Chartley;
Major Congreve V.C; R.A.F. airfield
at Hixon 1942 - 1945; plane crashes;
gypsum mine at Drointon.

My name is Allan Barnes. I have lived at Station View, Stowe by Chartley since 1973. Across the road from my house is the old Station House for Stowe. It is now a private home and the old Stafford to Uttoxeter Railway is long gone. Some of the old bridges are still intact. In some places the track of the old railway is used as farm track, in others it is overgrown and in some places it has been incorporated into the gardens of adjoining houses.

My father Sydney James Barnes originally came from Wiltshire. He came to live in Uttoxeter where he worked for Whieldons as a driver and conductor on their buses - the Green Bus Company it was called. My father Jim worked for them for well over twenty years on all the Green Bus Company routes including the Uttoxeter - Stafford route. I often used to go with my father on the buses.

I was born at Nightsfield Cottage at the top of Highwood, Uttoxeter. My mother Eunice Lydia Barnes (nee Smith) came from Heath Hayes. Father and Mother lived in Coventry and had to be evacuated in 1941/42 to Uttoxeter after German bombing raids on the city.

My father was a great naturalist. He and myself and my five brothers and sisters used to go for walks in the fields and along the old railway line. I still enjoy walking to this day and have written three of a series of walks in the area which were published recently by Stowe Parish Council.

I have visited Chartley Moss with an authorised local guide who has land bordering it. There is a bridle path alongside it. There is about forty-five feet of water under Chartley Moss with three to six feet of moss. An interesting condition prevails at the Moss where on one side the water is alkali and on the other is acid. It is a very dangerous area on private land and anyone wishing to visit it must first contact English Nature.

In February 1994 a Vickers Viscount aeroplane carrying mail from Edinburgh to Coventry crashed in a blizzard near Chartley Moss killing the pilot. The co-pilot was rescued by two local men. Chartley Moss is owned by Michael Hurdle, owner of Marston Brewery, Burton.

A few years ago a local artist, Alan Preiss, did some research on Chartley Castle and came across a reference to Robin Hood. Locally there is a tradition that Robin Hood was born at Loxley five miles further along the road to Uttoxeter where there is a Robin Hood's Chapel. It is said he was born at Loxley, wed at Doveridge and buried at Bramshall. At Doveridge, which is only a couple of miles from Uttoxeter across the River Dove, there is a huge old yew tree in the Churchyard. It is said to be 1,000 years old and that Robin was married to Maid Marion under its branches.

Another local tradition is that somewhere beyond Chartley Castle is the site of the original village of Chartley. At the back of the castle is a beautiful Bluebell Wood which in Spring every year is breath-taking.

There used to be a herd of ancient Chartley cattle on the Chartley Estate said to have originated from Aurac cattle. In Stowe by Chartley village hall is the mounted head of a Chartley cow with the distinctive black nose and ears. The breed also had black feet. A branch of the old Chartley herd was recently re-introduced to the Chartley Estate.

In 1992/93 plans were put forward to build a giant waste tip on the Chartley Estate which would have entailed 25 million tons of waste being dumped on the estate over a twenty five year period. Local people objected very strongly to the scheme. What saved the day was the devastating affect such dumping would have had on Chartley Moss which is classified as an International Nature Reserve and an area of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.I.)

Not far from the ruins of Chartley Castle is a very bad bend on the A518. Accidents regularly occur at the bend with vehicles crashing into each other or ending up in the hedges. A lot of people say it is to do with the camber of the road being wrong, but I believe that motorists are going too fast.

In the 1950's I saw an R.A.F. lorry carrying an aeroplane fuselage on a long trailer trying to negotiate the original bend and getting stuck. The bend was altered but still the accidents continued. In 1995 work was carried out to change the camber of the road on the bend. I wonder if it will improve things? Time will tell. Near the bend can be seen the remnants of the original track that went to Chartley Castle.

Mrs. Alexander, daughter of Major Congreve V.C. lives not far from Chartley Castle. She is about eighty years old and is a writer. Her father owned Chartley Hall and Chartley Estate and won his Victoria Cross for bravery in the First World War. His son also won a Victoria Cross.

Village delight as dumping appeal is withdrawn

By Colin Roobottom

VILLAGERS have won a fight to stop plans to dump two million tonnes of waste in Staffordshire countryside.

Families living near the proposed 300-acre tip at Chartley, near Stafford, said they were "over the moon" the scheme had been scrapped.

Receivers acting for Chartley Park Farms launched an appeal after failing to win planning permission for the landfill site.

But today Staffordshire County Council, which refused permission because of fears over pollution and the effect on the countryside, revealed the appeal had been withdrawn.

Anti-tip campaigner Mr Chris Wood, of Stowe-by-Chartley, said people were relieved the time and expense of a public inquiry had been avoided and the plans laid to rest.

He said: "We are over the moon, it is quite marvellous. It would have been a lot of hassle going to a public inquiry and would have cost us money."

"I can only assume that on reflection the Receiver must have realised he was not going to get planning permission for this scheme and withdrew his appeal."

Mr Bill Hughes, chairman of the county planning committee, also welcomed the withdrawal of the appeal which had lifted the threat of pollution to Stoney Brook and Blithfield Reservoir.

Fears for the "unique character" of Chartley Moss, a designated area of special scientific interest, and the impact on the footpath alongside Hand

Leasow Wood had also been lifted.

Mr Hughes said: "I am pleased Chartley Park Farms have accepted the decision and agreed tipping of so much waste in the countryside would be a visual intrusion and a potential risk to so many people."

"To put the county council and the local residents to the trouble of a public inquiry would have cost everyone a lot of money, time and worry."

My father told me that the R.A.F. had a store for bombs at Amerton. R.A.F. personnel would bring the bombs from the store across the A518 and along Bridge Lane to Hixon airfield. There they would be loaded onto Wellington Bombers for air raids on Germany during the Second World War.

A number of R.A.F. bombers crashed around Hixon. One plane crashed at the back of the Old Mill Cottage just down from Chartley Hall, off the A518.

My wife Janet Barnes (nee Bloor) was born at Poppinjay Farm on the A518 just outside Uttoxeter. She lived most of her life in Weston where her father was a farmer.

In the early 1900's Janet's great-uncle Ben Bloor was killed when his pony and trap collided with the Jubilee Tree at the crossroads in Stowe by Chartley by the thatched cottage. Janet's maternal grand-parents were Whittakers who lived at Loxley.

Sidney Barnes, no relation, the England cricketer used to live in my house or the one next door. I believe he still holds some bowling records for England. Sidney Barnes was also a calligrapher for Stafford County.

There used to be a gypsum mine not far from here at Normans Wood Farm, Drointon. The gypsum was mined at about a depth of 280 feet (85 metres) in galleries like a coalmine and are probably still there 41 years later after the mine closed in 1955.

When we first moved here there was very little traffic on the roads. I can remember a large collie dog named Scott owned by Mr. Sinclair lying sprawled across the road in Stowe by the bend near Hawthorn Farm and The Lodge. It never came to any harm. It wouldn't stand a chance today.

When I was a boy Weston Bank was very steep. The road was only two lanes - one up and one down through a deep cutting in the sandstone rock. Many a time when my father took me with him on the bus the steepness of the hill slowed the bus down to a crawl. In Winter the road could be really treacherous.

Staffordshire Newsletter, Friday, October 11, 1996

Pip out to boost charity's profile

A STAFFORD businessman has taken on the task of promoting a children's charity in Mid Staffordshire.

Pip Evans, fifth generation family member of the Evans and Evans chartered surveyors and estate agents, is the new chairman of the NSPCC Mid-Staffs branch.

He succeeds John James, who retired after 27 years at the helm.

"People in business and the private sector always need reminding of how important the work of the NSPCC is," said Mr Evans.

"The more they are told, the more they will want to help. Staffordshire people are very generous and caring. I see my role as



CARING ROLE: *Pip Evans, new chairman of the NSPCC Mid-Staffs branch.*

one of combining good public relations with support for our hard-working local groups."

Mr Evans has also chaired and served on the committees of other charitable organisations, including Staffordshire Association for the Welfare of the Blind, the Stafford Round Table and the Staffordshire Association of Boys' Clubs. He also serves as a Sheriff's officer for the county.

Mr Evans is married with three children, and lives in Stowe-by-Chartley.

We have arrived in the village of Stowe by Chartley where we'll stop awhile to read about the village's past.



Stowe by Chartley with the village school on the right.

Staffordshire Newsletter, Thursday, July 30, 1998



The Cock Inn at the start of World War One.

STOWE BY CHARTLEY

As we continue up Station Road we arrive at the railway bridge over the old Stafford-Utttoxeter railway line. There was once a railway station with a station master's house and you could travel by rail to Stafford and beyond in one direction and to Utttoxeter, Derby and on to Skegness in the other. The line and the station are now long gone and the station master's house is a private residence. One relic of the old Stowe by Chartley Station – the old platform Waiting Room - has been rescued and is being restored at nearby Amerton Farm as part of Amerton Railway. It is still possible to walk some distance along the old rail track towards Utttoxeter. The track is rather overgrown in places but there is a fascinating artificial glen formed when the track had to be cut through the banks to reduce the gradient and keep the line level.

Stowe resident Elisabeth McOwan in her booklet 'The Village of Stowe by Chartley', 1988 pens a romantic description of the old railway line.

"The great occasion in the summer was the show on the Castle Field which drew crowds so large that one year the platform collapsed beneath the weight of people descending from the train. The single track railway line, a branch of the Great Northern Railway, had been build shortly after the turn of the century (1900) and wound its way from Stafford to Utttoxeter, stopping five times and travelling so slowly, some say, that passengers had time to get out, pick a bunch of flowers and catch up with it again. Situated just beside the bridge was a busy loading platform for milk, cattle, coal and salt. There was extensive press and television coverage in 1956 when during the removal of the railway track the Victorian iron gentlemen's urinal disappeared from the station

platform". I wonder where it ended up as it's rather large antique piece to be kept in an ordinary home.

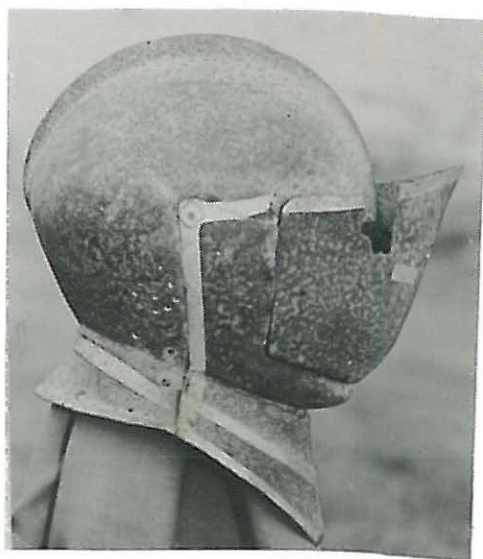
Almost immediately after the bridge we come to Stowe Village Hall on the left. The original hall was built in the 1920's but it was recently refurbished thanks to a National Lottery Grant. On a wall in the hall is the stuffed head of one of the original Chartley cattle. On March 31, 2000 Stowe split with its neighbour Hixon after 106 years of being part of a much larger Parish Council. Hixon now has its separate Parish Council and Stowe by Chartley Parish Council is responsible for the village of Stowe and surrounding areas. On leaving the village hall we arrive at a sharp bend in the road and on the left hand side is the old school house with the old village school adjoining. According to Elisabeth McOwan a school in the village was operating as early as the 1870's and known as Stowe Council School. Later it was known as the Earl Ferrers Primary School in recognition of the relationship with the benefactors of nearby Chartley Hall.

In 1900 when Mr. Daniel was Headmaster there were eighty five children on the roll. Mr. Prince followed and he was head during the Second World War when the school excelled at collecting salvage for the war effort beating twenty five other Staffordshire schools for three years in succession.

In 1952 Mr. Lawrence Quick became Headmaster following Mr. Prince. There were sixty five children on the roll. When the school closed in 1974 there were just thirty four children on the school roll.

As we leave the old school we pass The Lodge on the left which was once the home of the Agent for the Chartley Estate. It was here where the rents were paid on Lady Day each year.

On the right hand side is the village post office and shop and nearly opposite it on the other side of the road is the impressive Norman church of St. John the Baptist founded about 1150 possibly by William de Ferrers who inherited Chartley through his wife Agnes de Blundeville in 1232.



The ancient helmet which used to hang over the tomb of Sir Walter Devereux of Chartley Hall in St. John the Baptist Church, Stowe.

William was the first of the long line of the Ferrers family to live at Chartley. Strange to say there is no mention of Stowe in the Domesday Book of 1087 or of a church.

In Stowe Church is an alabaster tomb to Sir Walter Devereux, one of the Ferrers family of nearby Chartley Hall, who died in 1558. Sir Walter was the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth's favourite Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex. Sir Walter Devereux, who lies in effigy between his two wives Mary and Margaret, had the tomb built in his own lifetime.

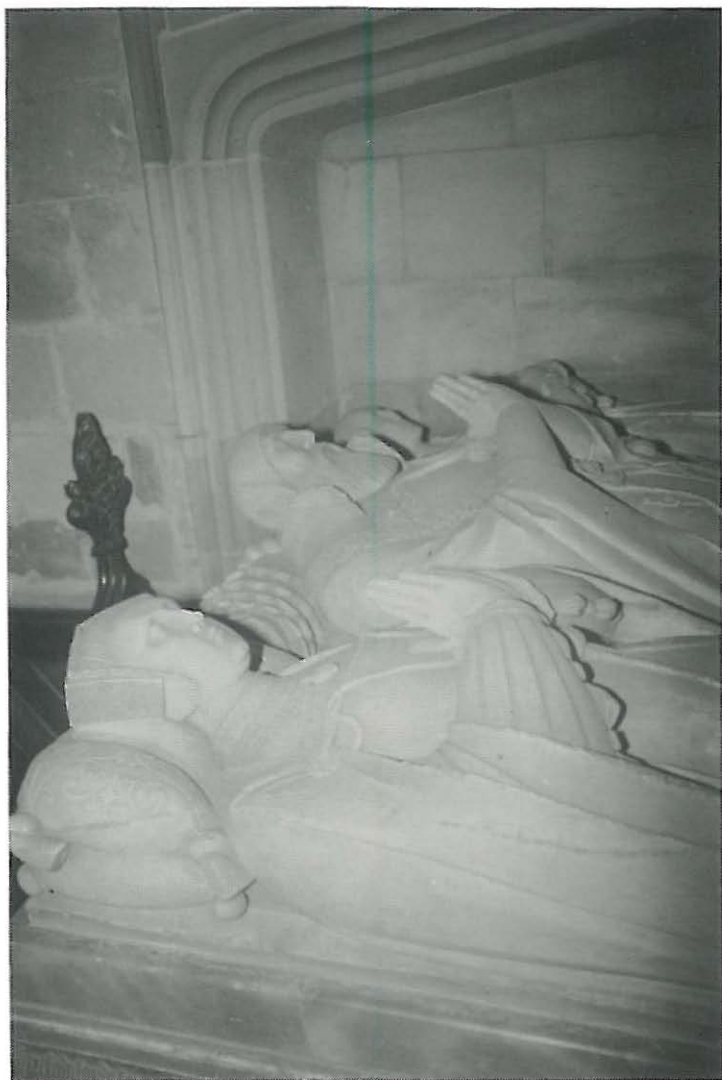
On the sides of the tomb are the figures of six sons in armour and six daughters in the fashionable dress of the day.

An ancient helmet used to hang above the tomb held there by a chain. In 1985 the helmet disappeared and soon after a letter was printed in the Newsletter pleading for its return. A few days later an anonymous phone call led the vicar, Andrew Little, and his churchwarden, Michael Brown, to the nearby village of Weston where they found the helmet, minus its chain, in a plastic bag in the porch of St. Andrew's Church.

The helmet is no longer kept at the church

Opposite the church is The Cock, a very old pub, possibly fifteenth century. The Robinson family used to run the pub and later in this book there are anecdotes about them and the Collier family who were also tenants of the pub. Next to The Cock just set back from the corner of Bridge Lane is a large detached house which was once a pub called The Cross Keys.

There is a large oak tree growing at the top of Bridge Lane where four lanes meet. This is the Jubilee Tree planted in 1897 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. It is said that the old hand stocks once stood here but disappeared at the time of the building of the railway. On the opposite side of the road to the old pub is a long thatched cottage which was once four separate cottages. Almost opposite the Jubilee Tree and the thatched cottage is the road to Drointon. The old village post office used to be on the corner. In a few moments we'll go up Drointon Lane to Normans Wood Farm to hear Arthur Lloyd's story.



The alabaster effigy of Sir Walter Devereux between those of his two wives at St.John the Baptist Church, Stowe by Chartley.



THE FINAL COLLECTION

WHEN village postwoman Elizabeth Farmer decided to retire, the people on her round organised their own collection.

But there was money not letters or cards in the collection—to thank Mrs. Farmer for her sterling service over the years.

And last week, the villagers presented her with over £55 in cash and a leather handbag.

Mrs. Farmer, of Bagots Street, Abbots Bromley, has been working in the Stowe-

by-Chartley area for 33 years.

Every day she cycled 16 miles around the villages of Blythe Bridge, Grindley and Drointon.

Mrs. Mary Deaville, of Wood Farm, Grindley, who helped to organise the collection, said: "She gave us absolutely marvellous service. She made the deliveries come hail, rain, snow or whatever.

"We felt we had to repay her for that."

Altogether, there were

56 donations raising a total of more than £62.

A presentation was held at Stowe Village Hall when Mrs. Farmer was also given a plaque from the village hall committee, a bouquet of flowers and other farewell gifts.

Above, Mrs. Farmer is pictured (front) at her farewell presentation. With her (left to right) are: Mrs. G. Massey, William Mellor, Yvonne Davis, George Waterson and Dawn Watterson.

Press cutting courtesy Bert Evans.

Stafford Newsletter February 23, 1973.



This thatched cottage at Stowe by Chartley was once four cottages. William Johnson, the blacksmith for the area, lived in one of them with his family. His blacksmith's shop was at Amerton not far from Ivy Cottage. One of the cottages in the middle had just one room upstairs and one room downstairs and was called "The Old Lady's Cottage" presumably because it was occupied by an old woman probably a widow or a spinster. The Jubilee oak tree planted in 1897 is in the foreground.

At the cross roads in Stowe by the thatched cottage if we turn left at the turning for Drointon we come eventually to Normans Wood Farm where Arthur Lloyd was born. In our next story he talks about his early days in Stowe and about the gypsum mines on Normans Wood Farm.

ARTHUR LLOYD'S STORY

Early days at Norman's Wood Farm;
school at Stowe by Chartley; work at Gayton and
Norman's Wood Farm; Cage Hill and the Evans
family, auctioneers; an eventful blind date at the
pictures in Stafford; the building of Hixon
airfield, chopping off the top of a house in the
flight path; the gypsum mines on Norman's Wood Farm,
rescue at the bottom of a 200 ft. shaft.

My name is Arthur Richard Lloyd. I was born on 12 January 1927 at Norman's Wood Farm, Stowe by Chartley. My father Arthur George Lloyd originally came from London. He worked for a family called Matthews at Cage Hill, Stowe by Chartley. When the Matthews family moved to a farm at Longdon between Rugeley and Lichfield we went with them. Later we returned to Stowe by Chartley where my grandfather, my mother's father, Edwin Handley, rented a forty-five acre small holding called Norman's Wood Farm from Sneyd Colliery, Stoke on Trent. My grandmother, Elizabeth Handley, nee Parsons, worked at the small holding and at the same time raised her family, sons Jack and George and daughter Dora, my mother. My twin brother George and I first started school at Longdon village school. When we moved back to Stowe by Chartley we went to the village school there where we were taught by Mr. Prince.

When George passed his 11+ examination he went on to the Grammar School now Alleynes High School, Uttoxeter. I went to Colwich C. of E. Senior School.

On leaving school at fourteen my first job was with Tom Knight who had a small engineering works at Gayton. We made cane cutters for dressing the grinding wheels for Universal Abrasives, Stafford and cutters for cutting pipework.

At the age of eighteen I went back to work at Norman's Wood Farm to help my grandmother Elizabeth as my grandfather Edwin Handley had become ill.

About that time Alfred Johnson and his wife lived at Chartley Hall. He was one of the owners of Johnson Brothers, a pottery firm in the Potteries.

George Massey and his wife lived at the old toll house on the main Stafford to Uttoxeter Road by the junction with Station Road, Stowe by Chartley. Whenever we wanted to go to Stafford or Uttoxeter we'd cycle down to the old toll house where we'd park our bicycles on the front lawn and then wait for the bus to complete the journey. I can remember up to thirty cycles being left on the lawn of the old toll house. No-one ever interfered with them.

One day I was invited by Geoff Hall of Cage Hill Farm to go to the pictures in Stafford. I said I didn't have any one to go with but Geoff told me not to worry. He brought along Beryl May Marston who became my wife. You could say we met on a blind date. My wife worked as a cook for John Evans, the auctioneer at Cage Hill. He was one of the founders of the Stafford estate agents Evans & Evans. John Evans' son Phillip, or Pip, was only a small boy at the time.

My wife's parents Alfred and Ethel Marston (nee Robinson) farmed at Amerton and later at Weston.

Geoff Hall kept a herd of Ayrshire cattle. His original herd of cattle had been infected so he killed them off. He had to wait a month and disinfect all his cattle sheds with white wash before he could get new stock. He travelled all the way to Scotland to get cattle he knew wouldn't be infected. The Ayrshire cattle at first were wild devils. They'd go through a barbed wire fence as if it didn't affect them. Gradually they settled down.

The Cock Inn at Stowe by Chartley was kept by my wife's grandmother Sarah Jane Robinson and later by her daughter Hilda Robinson.

I remember Hixon airfield being built about 1942. Some of the local small holders used to hire out their horses and carts to move soil for about £9 a day - a lot of money in those days. A firm by the name of Trollope & Collis built the airfield. I believe they only had to knock down two farm houses - Grange Farm at Amerton and another one along Stowe Lane, owned by a Mr. Samson and which was in the flight path of one of the runways. They took the top off the house and made it into a bungalow and it's still there.

My wife's brother Frank Marston worked at building the airfield when he was sixteen. I was at that stage earning 15/- (75p) a week and the tea-boy at the airfield was getting 35/- (£1.75) a week. We weren't exactly over-paid and we did envy the wages of the workers on the airfield.

There was a blacksmith's shop run by Freddy Martin at Lea Heath. There were three families living in the old thatched cottage by the crossroads in the village - the Poveys, the Johnsons and the Smiths.

In the early 1900's there were gypsum mines on Norman's Wood Farm. They were closed down after three men drowned in the mines.

During the Second World War the farm was owned by Mr. Marston the brewery owner from Burton upon Trent. He sold the mines to Sneyd Colliery, Stoke on Trent who intended to mine the gypsum for use in the coal mines in Stoke to prevent the risk of explosion from fire damp or methane gas.

Major Norman Ratcliff lived at the top of the lane and Norman's Wood was called after him.

A drilling rig which had originally been used in the South African gold fields was brought to Norman's Wood Farm and used to help in the search for deposits of gypsum. A number of boreholes were drilled on various parts of the farm. They must have found evidence of deposits of gypsum for around 1947 Sneyd Colliery started work on sinking a shaft at the farm. Berry Hill Plant of Stoke on Trent erected the headgear and three test shafts were sunk in the big field. They brought in local well-diggers Freddie Morris and Ted Smith from Gayton to sink the main shaft. As they dug down they bricked the sides of the shaft. They had to dig through solid clay until they arrived at the main gypsum seams.

At the bottom of the shaft there was a large sump into which the water from the tunnels was pumped so that the men could mine in there. At night all the water collected at the bottom of the shaft was pumped out into a nearby brook. The water had a high lime content. The temperature in the mines was a constant 52° all the year round. At night maintenance work was done on the cage or lift which took the men down into the mines. It was also used to bring up the gypsum. While the winding engine man remained at the top the other engineer went in the cage to the bottom of the shaft. There was a plumb bob at the side of the headgear to show what level the lift was. One night the cage gates jammed leaving the engineer trapped at the bottom. The engineer at the top came over to our house for help. I had to go down the 200 ft. ladder and with a set of spanners release the mechanism.

There was no danger of explosion or fire in the mines from firedamp like there is in coal mines. There isn't any methane gas.

Once when I was in the mine I was shown a seam of gypsum a yard thick. When an electric light was placed behind the seam you could see the light right through the seam. It was quite incredible.

The seams were blown out by explosives. The lumps of gypsum were then loaded into pit trucks and pushed along the narrow rail tracks to the bottom of the shaft where the trucks were loaded into the cage and taken to the surface. The trucks were then pushed on rail tracks to a stone crusher or petrol-driven hammer mill where the gypsum was crushed into powder and bagged up. The fine gypsum was used for dental plaster, plaster of Paris and cement. The impure gypsum was used in coal mines. It was spread on the floor of mines to reduce the risk of explosion or fire. Gypsum is much softer than alabaster.

My wife and I were married on 13 September 1952 at St. John the Baptist Church, Stowe by Chartley. We have three children, Carol, Diane and John.

Strange to relate there is no record of Chartley in the Domesday Book. Gayton and Amerton are recorded together and before the Norman Conquest were held by Aelmar and Alric presumably two Saxon earls. Earl Roger held the two townships after 1066 and he sub-let or granted them to Wulfric and Gosbert who presumably were Norman feudal under-lords of his. There was one hide with land for four ploughs and land for one plough which belonged to the lord of the manor. There were ten villagers with four ploughs – I wonder if this is a repeat of the above – and there were six smallholders. There were six acres of meadow land and woodland one league long by half a league wide. The value of Gayton and Amerton in 1087 was thirty shillings.

Next we have a few words from 94 year old Bill Dawson of Stafford who remembers servicing the Robinsons' bus at Stowe by Chartley. That is followed by Arthur Robinson's story whose grandmother started Williams' Bus Service popularly known as Robinsons' Bus. She was also landlady at The Cock Inn, Stowe by Chartley. Arthur's story is followed by that of his cousin and close neighbour Albert Marston. Albert lived at The Cock Inn when he was a boy.

BILL DAWSON'S STORY

My name is Bill Dawson. I was born in Stafford in 1907. I'm now 94 years old. I can remember the start of the First World War. I worked as a mechanic for Gwennaps on the Wolverhampton Road, Stafford for between fifteen and twenty years. I left Gwennaps in 1947.

Two brothers, Jack and George Robinson, ran a bus service to Stafford from Stowe through Hixon. Jack did the driving. The bus was kept in a corrugated iron garage just outside Stowe on the road to Hixon next to the cottage where Jack Robinson lived with his wife. I believe the garage and the cottage are still there. I used to go out to Stowe by Chartley whenever the Robinsons had trouble with their bus or whenever it needed servicing. The Robinson bus service continued for some years and was eventually bought out by Midland Red. At one time George Robinson lived in a house near Weston Hall on Weston Bank. Sometime after Jack Robinson's wife died he married a Mrs. Williams who had two sons Fred and Bill. At the beginning of the Second World War Fred Williams came to work under me at William Gwennaps garage. He joined the RAF and trained as an engine fitter. Bill Williams kept The Plough at Amerton. The Robinsons and Mrs. Williams kept The Cock Inn at Stowe.



The corrugated iron garage next to Ivy House, Stowe Lane, Stowe by Chartley. Jack Robinson lived with his family at Ivy House and the bus was kept in the garage. The bus service ran between Stafford and Uttoxeter. Jack drove the bus which was owned by his mother Sarah Jane Williams, tenant landlady at The Cock Inn, Stowe by Chartley.

ARTHUR ROBINSON'S STORY

1912 the Robinsons arrive at The Cock Inn,
Stowe by Chartley, Mrs. Robinson becomes
Mrs. Williams, Starts Williams' Bus Service,
Robinsons Coal Merchants, Road Hauliers,
Steam trains on the Stafford-Uttoxeter Railway
Line in the fifties, Hilda Robinson landlady at
The Cock, Pub bought by Mr. Beardmore.

My name is Arthur Robinson. I was born at Ivy House, Stowe Lane, Stowe by Chartley in 1939. My parents were Jack and Ivy Robinson, nee Collier. My father's sister – my aunt – Hilda Robinson ran The Cock Inn, Stowe by Chartley as did her parents before her.

My grandparents Arthur John and Sarah Jane Robinson kept a pub at Marston Montgomery before they moved to The Cock Inn at Stowe in about 1912. In 1915 just a few years after they moved there Grandfather Robinson died. He was only thirty eight years old. My grandparents had five children Jack, my father, born in 1902, Hilda born in 1907, Jim born in 1909, George born in 1910 and Ethel whose year of birth I don't know.

My grandmother Sarah Jane Robinson continued to run The Cock and some time later married a man by the name of Williams who helped her run the pub. Unfortunately, about two years after they were married Sarah Jane's second husband died.

It was as Sarah Williams that my grandmother started the bus service called Williams' Bus Service. By all accounts the bus was kept in the corrugated iron garage next to Ivy House, Stowe Lane where my parents lived. My father Jack

Robinson drove the bus which ran between Stafford and Uttoxeter while his sister Hilda was the bus conductress. The corrugated iron garage with the remains of a petrol pump is still there do-day –2001. My father also drove a charabanc or coach presumably on trips to the seaside. I have several old photographs showing various Robinsons with some of the business vehicles they owned. In one my grandmother Sarah Williams is standing proudly behind one of her buses outside The Cock Inn.

My father's brother, my uncle George Robinson, ran a coal business delivering coal in sacks from the back of a flat top lorry. At one time the coal lorry was kept in the yard at the back of The Cock Inn where there was an office and sheds. In my memory there were three coal lorries – my dad Jack drove one, Uncle George drove another and Herbert Evans drove the third. Sometimes one of the Hammonds drove one of the lorries. The Hammonds used to keep a grocery shop at Hixon. I believe Eric Sergeant might also have been one of the lorry drivers. Uncle George also did a milk round in the village. He collected the milk in large milk churns from local farmers. My father helped him out on occasions.

In 1927 the Stowe Parish Floral and Horticultural Show was held at Chartley Castle by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison. In the brochure for the event there is an advert promoting the coal business of B.J. Robinson – Bernard Jack Robinson – my father. The business developed into general haulage and coal merchants. It eventually became known as Robinson Bros. Dad also used to help my grandmother at The Cock as did his sister Hilda and when she took over the pub he continued to help. When you think about it, between them the Robinsons were quite an enterprising family, running a pub, a bus service, a coal business, a haulage service and a milk round. I can remember the trains running on the Stafford-Uttoxeter railway line. In the early fifties I helped my dad to shovel beet pulp from the goods wagons at Grindley Station onto the back of his lorry. It was very smelly work.



Sarah Jane Williams, landlady of The Cock Inn, stands proudly next to her bus outside the pub in Stowe by Chartley.

As a boy I would often stand on the bridge at Stowe and wait for the steam trains to go by. I enjoyed the sensation of being enveloped in the steam and smoke billowing over the bridge as the train went by.

In 1965 because of ill health my father Jack sold his haulage business to a friend of his, Hubert Nicholls, of Milford who had his own bus and haulage business. Uncle George's son, Stan Robinson started his own haulage business. His trucks are a familiar sight on the roads.

Ivy House, Stowe Lane looks out over the disused Hixon airfield. During the second world war while we lived there we had an RAF officer billeted with us. We were one of the first in the village to have a telephone – perhaps because of the coal business – and it was used regularly by RAF personnel. In 1942 we moved down Stowe Lane to Rose Cottage where I now live and the Sergeant family moved into Ivy House. When we had the phone put in at Rose Cottage we had to pay to have the telephone poles put in to carry the wires from Hixon. I believe that George Robinson for a time at Weston Hall Farm at the side of Weston Hall where Paul Reynolds now live. Later Uncle George lived at Rose Cottage, Stowe Lane where I now live.

In 1948 when Grandmother Robinson died Aunt Hilda Robinson took over the tenancy of The Cock. She ran it with the help of various member of the Robinson family including my father. She retired in 1984. The brewery then sold the pub and it was bought by Mr. Beardmore who still runs it to-day.

On the outside The Cock Inn is still the same as it was when my grandparents took over in 1912 but the inside is now very different. When Aunt Hilda ran it there was only a small wooden tap bar with wooden scrub-top tables in the tap room. There was a snug on one side. There was a club room for functions and I believe that is now called The Cricket Pavillion. I can remember Dad and Auntie Hilda carrying the beer out of the cellar in jugs. There were no pumps in those days.



**George Robinson's flat top coal lorry loaded with bags of coal
parked outside the gate to St. John the Baptist Church,
Stowe by Chartley.**

Brereton & Ilkeston Coal.

B. J. ROBINSON,
Coal Merchant
and
Haulage Contractor,
STOWE-BY-CHARTLEY, Stafford.

MOTOR LORRIES FOR HIRE.
ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TOO.

Hilda's last round



NEWSLETTER—FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7 1984

WHEN Hilda Robinson first came to the Cock Inn at Stowe-by-Chartley, King George V had been on the throne just two years and the vote for women was still six years away.

It was 1912, the year in which the passenger liner Titanic sank with the loss of 1,500 lives. D. H. Lawrence was busy writing the classic, *Sons and Lovers*.

Last week, in an age when jet fighters fly over her village, Hilda retired from the licensed trade at the age of 77.

Hard

This veteran landlady said a sad farewell to the pub that has been her home for the past 70 years and looked back on decades of great change.

"I remember when there was a railway station at Stowe," said Hilda.

"It was the old Great

Landlady bows out after 72 years at pub

Northern to start with. Then the LMS.

"The school that I went to is now a bungalow and there are lots of new houses. And we used to use Morse code before telephones."

Hilda's father died just two years after arriving at Stowe, leaving his widow with the pub and five children to bring up.

Although times were hard, says Hilda, they managed. The family started a coal merchant business and their own bus company providing transport to Stafford.

One brother drove and Hilda was the bus conductor!

As time went by, the family married and moved away and Hilda took on the tenancy of the Cock in 1948 when her mother died.

Since then, with the help of her two nieces, Janet and Ursula, and nephew Albert, Hilda has kept the pub as an old village local.

Fond of gardening, knitting, crochet and also making her own jams and pickles, Hilda will have no shortage of hobbies to pursue when she moves to a bungalow in Ilxton.

She will certainly be missed at the pub. 84/2850

Uncle Jim married a woman from Stone and went to farm in Upton, Huntingdon. He had a son and a daughter. Ethel Robinson married William Marston and lived at the Salt Works in Weston. They had twelve children. One of them my cousin Albert Marston lives opposite me in Stowe Lane.

Hilda, 77, says farewell to pub



Veteran landlady Miss Hilda Robinson is saying a sad farewell to the Staffordshire village pub that has been her home for more than 70 years.

Miss Robinson is retiring this week from the Cock Inn at Stowe-by-Chartley, near Stafford.

And she has taken the opportunity to reflect on a lifetime in the licensed trade, during which she has seen beer rise in price from five old pence to 60p a pint.

Miss Robinson (pictured) celebrates her 78th birthday next week and remembers her childhood and her life in the village with fond memories.

She was born in a pub at Marston Montgomery, near Uttoxeter, and moved to Stowe when she was just five years old.

"It was little more than a hamlet in those days and most of the cottages were still thatched," she said.

"The price of a pint was just 5d but of course people earned much smaller wages."

During her years at the Cock, she has sold a variety of beers including Buntings of Uttoxeter, Parkers from Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Ind Coope and now Ansells.

Miss Robinson and her niece, who helps run the pub, are planning to move into a bungalow at nearby Illoxon.

"I won't be too far away and I hope to be back to spend the occasional evening with the regulars," Miss Robinson added.



A happy looking group beside a Williams' Bus on an excursion possibly to Southport in 1923. It was probably a church outing. Note all the ladies' hats.



Ethel and Hilda Robinson with a Williams' Bus outside The Cock Inn, Stowe by Chartley circa 1920.



The track of the old Stafford to Uttoxeter railway line as seen from the bridge at Bridge Lane, Stowe. In the middle distance can be seen a windsock for a private airfield running alongside the old track. On the left of the photo can be seen what was once part of the old Hixon wartime airfield.

ALBERT MARSTON'S STORY

My name is Albert Marston. I was born in 1937 in Weston. My parents were William and Ethel Marston, nee Robinson. I was one of twelve children. I first went to school at Weston School where I was taught by Mr. Mills. I never got on with him. He constantly tried to make me write with my right hand. He never gave me any peace and kept on at me about it. I couldn't bear it and one day I ran away from school. Because I was so unhappy my parents took me out of Weston School. They managed to get me into Stowe by Chartley School where the head teacher was Mr. Albert Prince. He said to me, 'You're Albert and I'm Albert, we're bound to get along with each other.'

Every morning I would travel from Weston to Stowe on a Green bus and return on the bus after school. Mr. Prince was a very fair man. At one time he had played for Manchester United. He used to play football with us in the school yard using a tennis ball. He was very clever with his feet and used to run rings round us.

One day it snowed so heavily while I was at school that there were no buses running and I was unable to get back to Weston. I went to my aunt Hilda Robinson – my mother's sister - who ran The Cock Inn at Stowe. 'Stay the night', she said and that was the beginning of what was to become a long overnight stay at The Cock. Having stayed one night and enjoyed it I began to stay with Auntie Hilda on the odd night, then I began to stay during the week while I was at school and

only going home to my parents at weekends. Eventually, when I was about eight years old I moved in permanently with Auntie Hilda and her mother.

My grandmother Sarah Jane Williams was ill in bed all the time I stayed at The Cock. She had a bedroom downstairs.

I never ever saw her walk. We used to push her everywhere in her wheelchair even to Chartley Hall for the annual Flower Show. Grandmother had remarried when her husband, my grandfather Robinson, died in 1915 some three years after they arrived at The Cock Inn at the early age of thirty eight. She married a farmer Mr. Williams from nearby Grange Farm, Amerton. He died in 1926 aged fifty two and is buried in Hixon churchyard. By a strange coincidence my grandmother and her second husband died on the same date April 7th but twenty years apart. My grandmother Sarah Jane Williams died in 1948 and is buried in Stowe churchyard as is Auntie Hilda Robinson who died in 1992.

Even though I was only a boy I used to help Auntie Hilda in the pub. The wooden barrels of beer were kept in the cellar. The barrels had to be tapped, i.e. a brass tap had to be hammered into each barrel, so that the beer could be drawn from them. The beer was run into large enamel jugs which were then brought upstairs to the bar from which it was poured into the customers' pint glasses. My uncle Jack Robinson helped his sister Hilda at The Cock. He sometimes had to advise me when pouring beer for a customer to 'give it the long drop' and that would mean raising your arm up to pour the beer from a height and that way give the beer a head of froth.

In the sixties I can remember tapping the barrels at 7 o'clock in the morning before I went to work at Harry Jackson's Mount Farming Company in Hixon. When you tapped the barrels you had to run off some of the beer in a glass to make sure it was clear and not cloudy. You also had to taste the beer to make sure it was alright. Often, my fellow workers

would smell the beer on my breath and make comments about me having a late night drinking session at The Cock.

The present car park at The Cock used to be a vegetable garden. In the summer holidays after the war Auntie Hilda would get me to work in the vegetable garden.

One summer's evening while I was digging in the garden I saw smoke and fire coming from the roof of the Colliers' home at Ivy Cottage, Amerton. Someone called the fire brigade and the fire was put out. The Colliers lost a lot of furniture and personal possessions in the fire. For quite a long time afterwards the cottage was left in a ruinous state.

There was a yard at The Cock where Uncle Jack Robinson kept a coal lorry and a gravel lorry. He started off with just one lorry and then when the business picked up he bought another one. Uncle Jack was one of the lorry drivers who was contracted to remove the earth and gravel to create Blithfield Reservoir near Abbots Bromley.

As a boy while I was staying with Auntie Hilda one of my jobs was to serve petrol to motorists from the petrol pump outside the corrugated iron garage by Ivy House in Stowe Lane. Drivers would call at the pub and I would go with them to serve the petrol. Charlie Gunn, the chauffeur for the Johnsons of Chartley Hall, was a regular customer and so dependable and honest that we used to give him the key to the petrol pump so that he could serve himself.

When she was sixteen my younger sister Janet Marston came over from our parents' home in Weston to help Auntie Hilda in the pub. She stayed until Auntie Hilda died in 1992 at New Road, Hixon.

During the war in order for Hixon Airfield to be built local farmers near the proposed runways were obliged to sell their farms. They had to get out quickly and there was a record eleven sales in fourteen days not the best way of getting a good price for their farming stock. The airfield was built by Trollope and Coles and my oldest brother Frank, who was fourteen at the time, was the tea boy for the workers.

Just down Bridge Lane in a field on the left there is an underground concrete shelter or bunker. The entrance, now bricked up, was in Bridge Lane. All that is visible of the shelter is a concrete block which could be mistaken for a pill box like the type used as military defensive posts during the war. The concrete structure was, in fact, used to ventilate the underground rooms. A few years ago the bunker was sealed off to prevent teenagers lighting fires in it and sleeping in it. It would be interesting to know what it was used for.

Further down Bridge Lane there is an old RAF single storey concrete hut. After the war two ex-airmen set up home in it while they worked on a large vegetable plot that had been set up on part of the disused airfield. They used to pick peas and potatoes and pull carrots. They used to fetch their water from a well near the thatched cottage at the top of Bridge Lane. Every night they would visit The Cock Inn for the company. One of the men, Harry Cumming, had a wife and family in Norfolk. Eventually, he found work at GEC and was able to bring them down to Hixon. He died a few years ago. His wife still lives in Hixon.

The Turners ran the village Post Office. They had a son John who went to Uttoxeter Grammar School. I went to Colwich Secondary School.

I met my wife one day while I was going to milk a cow which Auntie Hilda kept a cow in a field off Stowe Lane. Ursula Whitehurst, was taking some cattle to her stepfather's field. We were married at Hixon Church in 1963. We have two children Stephen, born in 1964 and Rita, born in 1966.

In the next few pages we'll look at the village of Hixon and Hixon airfield. That will be followed by the story of Miss Williams who served in the WAAF and served at Hixon base during the Second World War.

HIXON

Hixon is called Hustedone in the Domesday Book. After the Conquest it is recorded as being part of land owned by the Bishop of Chester. A man by the name of Picot held it from the bishop and it would appear that it was sub-let to a man called Nigel. There were five villagers with two ploughs. There were three acres of meadow. All in all it didn't seem to be a very prosperous place and its value was only 10s 9d. There is no mention of the Anglo-Saxon earl who owned the land before the Conquest. Hixon has also been spelt Huscedon, Husceton and Huctesdone.

Hixon is probably best known for its wartime airfield and for the large industrial estate which now occupies part of the old airfield.

Hixon is fortunate in having a thriving local history society under the keen chairmanship of Dr. Malcolm Garner. Regular meetings are held at the Hixon Memorial Hall with some special exhibitions on wartime anniversaries. Fortunately a lot of research has been done on the airfield which will be preserved for posterity. The society seems to have collected a large amount of photos and ephemera related to the airfield. Older Hixonians are proud of one of their connection with Wilmot Martin. He was called the 'Staffordshire Harry Lauder' because he sang like the Scot Harry Lauder even wearing a kilt like him. During the First World War Wilmot Martin gave concerts all over Staffordshire to raise money for the soldiers on the front. Wilmot Martin farmed at Grange Farm and Yew Tree Farm, Hixon.

On January 6, 1968 eleven people died and forty five were seriously injured when an express train collided with a road transporter on Hixon level crossing.

A very active Parish Council made sure villagers in Hixon celebrated the new Millennium in style. They also ensured that there was a more lasting memorial with a Millennium Green.

By the time you read this Hixon should have its own website at www.staffs.org.uk/villages/hixon.

Staffordshire Newsletter, Thursday, January 6, 2000

A DATE SET IN STONE FOR VILLAGERS



ROCK OF NEW AGES: Roly and June Tonge with the four-ton granite block, unveiled on New Year's Day. 00/01

HUNDREDS of Hixon residents turned out for the official opening of the village's Millennium Green on New Year's Day.

A giant four-ton granite block was heaved into position to mark the opening, which was officially unveiled by June Tonge, wife of former borough councillor Roly.

A beacon was lit and a firework display ensured the event went off with a bang. A specially-commissioned flag and the flag of St George were hoisted into place on flagpoles flanking the stone.

Villagers were invited back to the Memorial Hall by Hixon Millennium Green trustees for a

hog roast and refreshments.

Trustee Diana Manley has completed an intricate tapestry of the green, which has been framed. Fellow trustees will now decide how it can best be used to raise money for the ongoing upkeep of the new village green.

HMG chair of trustees, Susan McKeown, said: "The day went extremely well. We had between 450 and 500 people there, so it was a very good turn-out."

The trustees have thanked everyone who helped with the project for no payment, including G Astbury and Co., who donated the granite block. Steve Foster Cranes, of Gayton, who hoisted it into position and Chartley Stonecraft, who engraved it.

DEATH OF MR. WILMOT MARTIN

THE STAFFORDSHIRE HARRY LAUDER

One of the best known and most highly esteemed personalities in Staffordshire and one familiar in neighbouring counties and with a remarkable record of public service, died at his home, "The Wee Hoose Mang the Heather," Hixon, on Wednesday, in the person of Mr. Wilmot Martin, M.B.E., the Staffordshire Harry Lauder. He was 88 and had been ill for some time. His wife, Mrs. Edith Martin, predeceased him on December 6, 1954, at the age of 82, and he is survived by a son and daughter (Mrs. S. Robinson), another married daughter having died in May, 1941.

In 1889 he married Miss Edith Kennerley, of Chorley, Lichfield, and went to Gratwick. When Mr. and Mrs. Martin celebrated their golden wedding in 1919 there were 120 guests at the party and the cake bore the words,

"Keep right on to the end of the road," from his favourite song and a phrase with which Mr. Martin concluded practically all his correspondence.

Mr. Martin's public service, particularly his work for charity was recognised by the award of the M.B.E., a decoration of which he was very proud.

Born in 1871 at Worston Mill House, Great Bridgford, Stafford, where his father was a miller, Mr. Martin received what schooling he had at Milwich, but he left at 11 years of age to start work and worked hard from then until his retirement from farming, which was his lifelong occupation, and it was to this that he attributed his good health and long life. He had lived in Hixon for over 56 years. It was in 1899 that he started farming at Church Farm, Gratwick, going to Hixon in 1906 to Grange Farm, under the late Lord Shrewsbury, and farmed there for well over 40 years and was the oldest tenant on the estate. He later combined the adjoining Yew Tree Farm of 133 acres, bringing the total acreage of the two farms to 308. Up to 1931 Mr. Martin ran the two farms, but then Yew Tree was made over to his son, Mr. F. J. Martin. At

the age of 86 he was still singing Harry Lauder songs. From the time he arrived at Hixon he literally threw himself into the service of others. He dated his first "bit of good work" to the day when he helped Major M. Ratcliffe and his father and mother to form a troop of Boy Scouts in the village. So successful were their combined efforts that for many years there were organised camping holidays at Anglesey and Devon.

Public Appointments

He had been a member of Stafford Rural Council for half a century, attending regularly up to the time of his illness. He also served on the Parish Council for over 40 years, was Chairman of Hixon branch of the British Legion from its inception in 1930, and assisted as Church Warden at St. Peter's for 50 years. He was at various times Chairman of the Memorial Hall Management Committee, Secretary and Chairman of Stowe branch of the National Farmers' Union, and of Stowe and Hixon Charities Trustees, and Chairman of Hixon Show Committee.



When 19 he joined the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry. A keen cricketer he was a founder-member of Gayton Cricket Club, which is still flourishing.

Every year, until the outbreak of War in 1914, he and his friends raised money to take all the village children for a trip to Blackpool, travelling on the old North Staffs. Railway. As they could not take the children for outings during 1914-18 War they then bought each child a new pair of boots each year.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin had two wounded Belgian soldiers as their guests all through the War. After the 1914-18 War Mr. and Mrs. Martin were given an armchair, and a gold wrist watch, respectively, together with an illuminated address, in recognition of the work of the concert party. Lady Congreve, of Chartley Castle, made the presentation.

At the end of the First War Mr. Martin wrote a book entitled, "A Minstrel in Staffordshire," the proceeds being for St. Dunstan's.

The sprightly, well-preserved old gentleman, with a happy smile and kindly word for everyone, was best known for his charitable work as the Staffordshire Harry Lauder with his Hixon Concert Party which he formed in 1912. He began his impersonation in 1912 after hearing Sir Harry Lauder sing in Birmingham and was so successful that the great Scots comedian, who bestowed on him the title after witnessing one of his performances. They subsequently became great friends, and Sir Harry visited him several times at Hixon and Mr. Martin often went to Sir Harry's home. He claimed with pride that he had raised over £25,000 in this way and had given more than 10,000 shows in 16 English counties.

A familiar sight in his horse-drawn float and Highland regalia, the troupe did magnificent work during the First World War, raising money to help ex-Servicemen maimed or blinded. As his fame spread, so the concert party extended their activities. Mr. Martin's daughter, Mrs. Robinson, was the party's pianist for over 30 years.

The friendship that grew between Sir Harry Lauder and Mr. Martin will not be easily forgotten for on housing sites in Hixon village, built by Stafford Rural Council, roads have been named "Martin's Way" and "Lauder Grove."

The largely attended funeral took place at St. Peter's Parish Church, Hixon, on Saturday, the Rev. Dudley Roberts (Vicar) officiating. There were no flowers by request, but donations were sent to St. Peter's Church.

Staffordshire Newsletter, Thursday, April 5, 2001

Revamp for website

HIXON is to get a revamped web page, packed full of information about the village.

Hixon Parish Council clerk, John Blount, is now working on the page and said a new one had been needed since the splitting of Stowe Parish Council into two separate councils for Hixon and Stowe-by-Chartley last year.

He added it will contain a section on village history and information about the Salute project to improve canal tow-path access.

It will also feature some companies based on Hixon industrial estate.

The Hixon page will be available in around 10 days' time at www.staffs.org.uk/villages/hixon and will be linked to The Community Council of Staffordshire's website.



A runway at Hixon Airfield as seen from the Hixon to Stowe by Chartley road. The Sampsons used to live in a three storey house on the other side of the road – behind the camera. The house was knocked down when the airfield was built in 1941 because it was thought the house would be too close to the flight path of the heavy bombers that would use the airfield.

HIXON AIRFIELD

Hixon Airfield was built between 1941 and 1942 on land belonging to the Greaves family of Amerton. The site was obviously chosen because of the flatness of the surrounding countryside.

On May 15, 1942 the first two Wellington bombers landed at the new RAF Hixon Airfield or 30 OTU – Operational Training Unit. The Wellingtons were used to train crews on the ground. Eventually Hixon had an establishment of thirty aircraft and every day inexperienced crews from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K. learned to fly the Wellington bombers. There were many crashes some nearby on taking off or landing and others hundreds of miles away. A large number of young men lost their lives and a small number of them are buried in the nearby churchyard of St. Peter's Church. Other young airmen from Hixon airfield lost their lives while flying bombing raids over German Occupied Europe.

On February 2, 1945 with the war in Europe coming to an end the last Wellington bomber flew out of Hixon and in June of that year war-time flying from Hixon finished. The airfield continued to be used by RAF 16 MU Stafford of storage. In August 1962 the airfield was sold. Part of the old airfield is used as an industrial estate.

Ron Balding of the Staffordshire Aviation Heritage Group gave me the following information. There were 2,393 RAF male personnel at Hixon during the war, 204 officers, 510 NCOs and 1679 ordinary ranks. There were 445 WAAF personnel with 10 officers and 435 ordinary personnel.



Wellington bombers being refuelled at RAF Hixon in 1943.



HOWDEN YOUTH CENTRE D OF E UNIT

Dear M. Foley.

In connection with the conversation you had with Peter Copley concerning the crashed Wellington Bomber.

For your information, briefly, we have discovered that the Wellington was a Mark 10, Number HF 471 (E) and took off from 30 O.T. 44 Hixon at 2025 hrs 11.4.44 on a cross country training exercise and crashed at Steelton E. Yates Map handranger 106 765235.

The Pilot C.H. Gale and his crew were killed. We do not know the names of the rest of the crew or where they were buried.

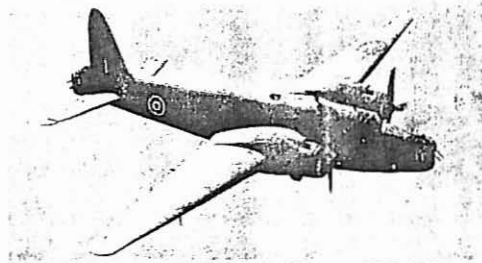
Thank you for your interest in this project

Yours Sincerely

H. Brown. 125

World War II Bomber crash at Skelton, nr Goole, Yorkshire.

Vickers Wellington B Mk10 HF471 (30 Operational Training Unit)



Wellington Mk10 similar to HF471

Vickers Wellington HF471 was based at Hixon, near Stafford. Whilst on a cross-country navigation exercise, it dived into the ground through clouds, at Sand Hall Farm at 21:00 hrs on 11th April 1944 (Map Ref: 106/767-227). The pilot, P/O Charles Henry George Gale R.A.F.V.R. plus the four crew were killed. The wreckage was not found until the following day. The cause of the crash is not known. Pilot Officer Gale is buried in Herringfleet churchyard in Suffolk.

On Sunday 9th May 1999, an investigation party, led by Mr Peter Copley, including students Priscilla Barber and Kevin Brown from Howden Youth Centre, in company with Aviation Archeologists Dick Barton, Ken Reast and Albert Pritchard, visited the area of the crash. The students, together with their colleagues Hazel Smith and Julian Westerman, are preparing a project report on the incident under the auspices of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

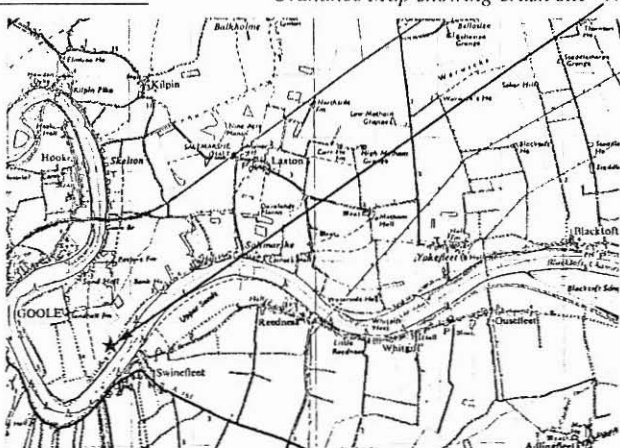
With the aid of metal detectors, a number of small pieces of wreckage were found just below the surface, in a pattern that suggested that the aircraft had skidded along the ground for approx. 100 metres after hitting the ground.

Vickers Wellington HF471 was built at the company's Chester factory and was powered by two Bristol Hercules XVIII radial engines of 1650bhp each. The fragments of wreckage found carried the Code No: 285 confirming the aircraft to be a Wellington.

Permission to visit and guidance to the site area was kindly given by Mr Richard Sweeting, as a direct representative of the landowner, Mr. Rob Sweeting.

This report for the Project Group was produced by Dick Barton, Ken Reast & Albert Pritchard, Aviation Archeologists, specialising in the recording of the histories of World War II aircraft crashes, and the consequent tragic loss of aircrew lives suffered during their devotion to duty in the service of our country.

Ordnance Map showing crash site ★



Dick Barton, Ken Reast, Albert Pritchard
Aviation Archeologists

9/5/99

Typesetting/Design by
Hi-Q Media Services

Miss Williams Remembers

Called up in 1942 in Stoke on Trent, joined the WAAF, Posted to RAF Innesworth, Glos., "Irons, Reveille & Lights Out" routine, Posted to Morecambe Bay, Square Bashing, Posted to RAF Cranwell, Posted to RAF Hixon, Need for bicycles at Hixon, Caterpillar Club. Methodist relations at Grindley, Jenkins Cafe in Stafford, Seighford airfield incident with my brother, Tragic crash of Wellington bomber on take off from Hixon, Posted to Nottinghamshire, Posted to Station X Bletchley Park, Posted to Horsham Station underground, Support from the Hemmings Methodist family, Back to Stoke on Trent and "Civvy Street".

In September 1942 I had been called up according to my age group to report for either Military Service or Munitions. I chose the W.A.A.F. – Women's Auxiliary Air Force- and as a result was told to report to the Bethesda Recruiting Office in Hanley on a given day. There I was to receive my Air Force number and travel warrant to RAF Innesworth in Gloucestershire. Little did I know at the time that this journey would alter my life for the next four years.

It was dark when we arrived tired and hungry at Innesworth Railway Station. we wondered why it took nearly all day to travel from Hanley to Gloucestershire. Could troop movements have perhaps delayed our train we wondered?

I vividly remember the first meal that I had there – almost cold potatoes and vegetables with a lamb chop surrounded by congealed fat. It was most unappetising! The pudding was

supposed to be a trifle and I thought I would be able to eat it but it turned out to be nothing more than a piece of cake with custard poured over it. Our "Irons", as the knife, fork and spoon we were issued with were referred to, had to be washed in a huge tank of very hot water outside the Mess. We had to dry the "Irons" by shaking the water off them. It was quite a shock for a young home-loving girl.

For the next week we were woken up each morning by the sound of the bugler playing 'Reveille'. After breakfast on the first morning we proceeded to the stores to collect our uniform which included grey stockings, underwear and black flat lace-up shoes. At night we went to bed to the sound of 'Lights Out' played by the camp bugler. This was to be our first and last experience of bugles calls for 'Reveille' and 'Lights Out'. They must have been more sophisticated at the next stations we were posted to because there they there used tannoys.

After being kitted out with all the things we would need we were shipped off to Morecambe Bay where we were allocated our living quarters along with some Land

Girls. Nineteen of us were billeted in my group. There was one Land Girl who was not very pleased to have WAAF girls thrust upon her and told us bluntly that she preferred 'gentlemen'. Consequently, our meals were provided with the minimum requirements by the RAF. There were certainly no embellishments to our meagre diet. Still we lived!

The next few weeks we were occupied with learning how to march in step with lots of other WAAF girls. It's surprising how some people find it hard to place their left foot down first when told to 'Forward March'! Vaccinations which made us feel under the weather didn't help us to feel less homesick. Letters and parcels seemed to go astray very easily. Perhaps our movement from one camp to another made it impossible to keep tabs on us. I remember my mum had said in a letter that she had sent me a parcel of goodies but I never received it. Perhaps it is still there mouldering away in some hidden cupboard.

When our 'Square Bashing', as our drill was called, was over I was told to report to RAF Cranwell. This was the RAF's university for regular airmen before the War. We, though, were just very lowly conscripts and were billeted in huts while we were introduced to the mysteries of the teleprinter. We did split turns at Cranwell. Maybe it was because the RAF was trying to rush as many groups as possible through the course because of the urgency due to the War.

On the evening shift we were marched down from the Mess to the section with lanterns 'fore and aft'. We had lots of giggles on our way and we were told in no uncertain tones to behave as responsible adults.

Our pay at this stage was about ten shillings a week - fifty pence in to-day's currency. You could buy a lot more with it in those days but it still wasn't a lot of money. We were advised to send some money to our parents so that they could be classed as dependants in case of accident. As I was still under twenty one, I was, to all intents and purposes, still needing parental permission to do anything. As you will appreciate, this left us with very little money to do any sight seeing. We were not issued with cycles at Cranwell and bus fares were just an extravagance that we could very ill afford. Our only forms of entertainment were reading books from the camp library and going to the camp cinema which fortunately was free. Food was adequate but uninspiring. We had a song which we sang to one another and certainly not in front of the officers:

'You volunteered, You volunteered,
You volunteered to join the Air Force.
Ten bob a week, nothing much to eat
Black shoes and blisters on our feet.
You volunteered, You volunteered,
You volunteered for King and Country.
If it wasn't for the War
You'd be where you were before.
Volunteers ++++ you're barmy.'

and much good it did us !!!!!!!

Just before Christmas 1942 after passing the teleprinter course successfully we were given our first leave before being posted for operations. We had seven whole days to eat real food and get back into our civvies –our normal clothes – if we were able to fit into them after three months of RAF stodge. Before we left Cranwell we were asked if we had any preference for the area where we would be posted. I had heard that a new airfield was under construction at Hixon and I asked if I could be posted there. I never thought that there would be any likelihood of being posted to the airfield of my choice. Usually if you mentioned your choice you could bet your boots that you would be posted as far away as possible from it. Still I could only hope. I passed three or four days of my leave in an agony of waiting. At the last moment a telegram arrived asking me to report to RAF 30 OTU – Operational Training Unit – at Hixon, Staffordshire. My joy knew no bounds.

I arrived at Hixon Railway Station in the dark and was told to report to the Guardroom. It was not my idea of a picnic to walk a long muddy road in the dark and carrying a full kit. Eventually, when I arrived at the Guardroom they took pity on me and produced an army lorry to take me to the WAAF site. Next morning I went to the Mess for breakfast and afterwards went to Signals Section to report my arrival. I was the first WAAF on the very new Signals Section but was very soon joined by other teleprinter operators and wireless operators – WOPs. We all worked together in a common room and the signals were distributed to the appropriate sections. this was the beginning of two happy years at Hixon.

While we were at Hixon a bicycle was a must. To get from the WAAF site to the Mess, from there on to work at Signals and then back again when work was over would have been a terrible waste of time if we had to walk. One girl could not ride so we

took it on ourselves to teach her. Every time that one of us had a moment to spare we helped her learn to ride. Eventually we said she was capable of going on the roads with the proviso that one of us would go with her. Unfortunately, she couldn't wait to try out her new skill and blithely started cycling to Rugeley on her own. When she saw a bus coming towards her it was too much and she headed straight for it -- head first. She ended up in hospital with a fractured skull. It didn't help her confidence in riding a bike.

One night we had been told over the tannoy that one our aircraft had crash landed and that the navigator had bailed out somewhere near the camp. Anyone off duty was asked to go out and look for him. I was on duty that night so I wasn't able to go out with my friends to look for him. He was found in a cabbage field nearby with a broken leg. For having landed safely by parachute he was made a member of the "Caterpillar Club. He was presented with a little caterpillar brooch which he wore very proudly.

Food was always on our minds at Hixon and unfortunately the food there wasn't very appetising. As possible future prospective mothers we girls in WAAF were allowed to have a glass of milk with our meals. As the men were not allowed this privilege we had to suffer a lot of ribbing from them.

I had some relations, an aunt and some cousins, who lived on a farm at Grindley about three miles from the camp. They were Methodists and attended the little chapel in Hixon village. Naturally, whenever I was off duty I went to chapel with them. At this time we were not allowed to go more than six miles from the camp in case of an invasion and so it was wonderful to cycle up to the farm at Grindley after the service and spend some time with them. Other members of the RAF and WAAF attended the chapel when they could and were also invited to the farm. Rations were tight but they always found something for us to eat. We spent many a lovely evening at the farm chatting and singing round the piano.

Camp entertainment was practically nil. There was a clapped out old bus that we sometimes caught to Stafford to see the delights of that town. Once we were on our way to Stafford when the bus conked out halfway up Weston Bank. We all had to get out and push it to the top of the hill where it reluctantly took us the rest of the way to Stafford.

On one of our trips to Stafford we were very hungry and called in at Jenkins Cafe. I don't think it is there any more. We ordered beans on toast and a cup of tea. As we only had nine pence each - 9d old money - we wondered what we would do if the meal came to ten pence and thought we might have to wash dishes. Fortune favoured us and the meal only cost us 9d each.

In June 1944 my brother was in the Air Training Corps or the ATC. As an incentive to join the RAF when they were old enough to do so the young men in the ATC were taken to Seighford, a satellite airfield to Hixon, to experience what it was like to fly an aircraft. While they were there a training plane had to land quickly as an engine was on fire. When it landed one of the crew was so anxious to escape that he jumped out of the aircraft while it was still taxiing down the runway and fractured his skull. Rumours reached the camp at Hixon that an ATC boy had been killed at Seighford. Naturally, I was terrified that it might be my brother who had been killed. I'm always being told that I jump to conclusions. I asked the signals sergeant if I could have permission to telephone Seighford and find out if the rumours were true. I was greatly relieved to hear that one of the ATC had been involved in the incident and that if the airman had stayed in the plane with the rest of the crew he would not have been injured. I certainly felt a great sense of relief.

30 OTU was a training airfield for pilots on Wellington bombers and unfortunately there were quite a few accidents. In one unfortunate crash a Wellington failed to reach the required height on take off and took the roof off a house on the Weston to Rugeley road. The entire crew was killed and a deep depression

hung over the camp for a long time. Fortunately other crashes were less dramatic but nevertheless all the accidents were scary. I can't remember exactly the date when we were told that the entire unit would be moving 'en bloc'. I know that it must have been Spring because I was in the middle of a bad dose of 'flu. I refused to go to Sick Bay and I didn't want to be separated from my friends. I struggled with a very sore throat, the loss of my voice and a tearing cough. The news came that we were moving to Gamston in Nottinghamshire. All our heavy kit was transported by truck to the railway station at Weston but we had to march in convoy to Weston carrying our gas masks, our tin helmets and small overnight luggage. I can remember feeling very ill and Weston seemed much further than three miles. To make matters worse when we arrived at Gamston the hut was not entirely waterproof and our 'biscuits' – three straw mattresses spread out to make our bed – were damp. We all felt very low and tears were soon trickling down our cheeks and we were wishing we were back at home.

I didn't stay long at Gamston for soon my posting came through for Station X. The WAAF administrator called me into her office and told me I was going to a very important place. I remember her saying that my greatcoat wasn't smart enough for one of her girls to go to Station X. I'd never heard of it and had no idea that it was Bletchley Park – or B.P. - the prestigious code breaking unit in Buckinghamshire.

On our arrival at Bletchley I was sent to work in the cookhouse while I was being vetted for my entry to the celebrated 'Park'. This was to ensure that my conduct and integrity was above reproach even though I was only to be a dogsbody teleprinter operator and not a code-breaker.

At B.P. the food was fantastic after the mundane food at other stations. In comparison it was more like a first class hotel. We had the luxury of real eggs, as against the powdered variety which we had only seen at the other stations. Perhaps the reason for the good food was to compensate for the stress of having to work

under such pressure. Everything had to be perfect as mistakes could mean disaster in some circumstances. It was at B.P. that I met my best friend Margery. We were near enough to London to spend some of our leave there. Margery and I made several trips to London and on one occasion we managed to see Brian Rix at Whitehall Theatre. I'm delighted to say that Margery and I still keep in touch.

During my time at B.P. the Japanese capitulated which meant the end of the War was in sight. Things were being wound down with less and less need for our kind of work. Fewer and fewer personnel were being employed. I received notification that I was to be posted to South West Signals. Although the Signals Section was officially at Box the WAAF site was at Corsham in Wiltshire. Signals Section was actually underground and the only way to reach it was by lift. Before the War it had been a quarry and now it houses teleprinters etc. The air we breathed was from a mine shaft about three miles away. This was as a precaution in case of a gas attack in the immediate vicinity overhead when we below ground would have been able to continue our work unaffected.

The lovely city of Bath was near enough for us to explore and to appreciate the beauty and architecture of this lovely city. Again, Methodism helped me to make some lovely friends. After the service at the chapel on the first Sunday that I could attend I was introduced to a farming family Mr. and Mrs. Hemmings. In the area we had the WAAF, RAF and Army and Navy personnel. Some of them who were Methodists congregated at the local chapel to be invited by the Hemmings to their house whenever they were free. Rations were very tight for them but somehow they managed to supply us with cups of cocoa and slices of bread and dripping. This usually helped to fill a space in some very hungry young people. I still write to their daughter who was only fifteen at the time. Unfortunately, Mr. Hemmings died some time ago. Mrs. Hemmings is still living at the ripe old age of ninety three but sadly her memory has gone.

In July 1946 everyday someone would come and tell me that their 'demob' papers had come through. Where were my papers I wondered. I was beginning to think that I had been forgotten. One day the Careers Officer called me in and asked me if I had any idea what I would like to do when I was released. I said that I would like to do similar work with the General Post Office – the G.P.O. The national telephone system was still managed by the Post Office in those days. She said that as I had been trained at Cranwell by G.P.O. engineers it would be highly likely that I would be accepted. She promised to get in touch with the G.P.O. at Stoke on Trent. Shortly afterwards I was called to her office and told that a job would be waiting for me on my demob. I was delighted.

At long last those elusive demob papers came through. I was posted back to Bletchley to get my release. After signing no end of papers, to the affect that I was very happy to be a civilian again, I was given the princely sum of £12. I was told I could keep the uniform I was wearing which I could use to re-clothe myself in civvies. I was then told that I was once again Miss B.M. Williams instead of 2105313 LACW Williams B.M.

We leave Hixon and return to Stowe by Chartley where at the crossroads we turn left by the thatched cottage and go down Bridge Lane on our way back to the A518. On the left hand side in a field can still be seen a wartime relic - a square concrete top to a number of underground rooms. Further along on the same side of the road is another war-time relic – a small single storey concrete building. The road then crosses over a bridge under which the old Stafford – Uttoxeter railway used to run. From here you can clearly see the old airfield. The land is very flat for miles around and therefore it must have been an obvious place to build an airfield during the war.

On arriving at the junction with the A518 we turn left towards Stafford and after a hundred yards or so we arrive at Ivy Cottage sometimes known as Saddlers Cottage, Amerton. Here we take up the story of the Collier family as told by Edwin Collier.

EDWIN COLLIER'S STORY

The Story of the Collier Family: Charcoal Burners, Publicans, Saddlers and Estate Agents.

Colliers in Chartley area for 400 years, Direct descendant of George Collier baptised Stowe by Chartley 1710, John Collier landlord of The Cock Inn 1812, My great grandfather James Collier a saddler at Ivy Cottage, Amerton 1852, married Elizabeth Chambers 19 children of marriage, My grandfather Edwin Collier saddler at Ivy Cottage, Unique photo taken circa 1885 at Ivy Cottage or Saddlers Cottage, Rates and Tax Collector in Stafford 1888, Recording the history of the Colliers 1942, My father Charles Collier took over the family business Edwin Collier & Son Estate Agents, 1952 - 1991 business continued by me until my retirement, Definition of a true Stowie, A piece of Robin Hood memorabilia in my backyard.

According to Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary a collier is' 'a charcoal-burner or dealer in charcoal or coal.' In the Middle Ages charcoal making was a thriving industry and it was made by charring wood through controlled scorching. It required a plentiful supply of wood and was used in smelting metal and forging iron into weapons and tools. Most of the area we know as Staffordshire was covered by woods in the Middle Ages – Cannock Chase and the Needwood Forest covered large areas in the south of the county providing plenty of wood for colliers to set up their wood piles. Charcoal was also used in glass-making and there was a glass-making industry in Abbots Bromley. It is more than likely that my Collier ancestors were charcoal burners who lived and worked in the area around Chartley.

There have been Colliers recorded in the Chartley area for nearly 400 years. About 1942 my grandfather Edwin Collier kept a record of the family and according to this the Colliers originated in Milwich about 1600. Doing my own research on the International Genealogical Inventory of the Mormon Church of the Latter Day Saints I was able to trace my ancestry back in Stowe by Chartley possibly back to the 1690's. George or Georgius Collier was baptised in the church of St. John the Baptist, Stowe by Chartley in 1710. In direct line of descent, father to son, I am descended from his parents, my great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents Thomas and Elizabeth Collier, whose son

Georgius Collier, baptised 1710 married Jane, whose son
George Collier, baptised 1739, married Anne, whose son
John Collier, baptised 1779, married Mary Catterill, whose son
James Collier, baptised 1807, married Miss Jenkinson, whose son
James Collier, baptised 1833, married Elizabeth Chambers, whose
son
Edwin Collier, baptised 1860, married Annie, Dean, whose son
Charles Collier, baptised 1896, married Clare Parker, whose son
I, George Collier, became when I was born in 1925.

In 1710 the baptismal certificates were still being written in Latin hence the entry Georgius rather than George for my great grandfather five times removed.

From a framed indenture at The Cock Inn, Stowe by Chartley dated January 30th 1812 I discovered that John Collier, my great great great grandfather, had purchased The Cock Inn for one year for 'the sum of five shillings of lawful English money' from a John Fitzgerald Esquire of St. Pancras, London. According to the indenture The Cock Inn and garden and land had previously been leased to a Thomas Yates. After one year John Collier was expected to pay a peppercorn rent 'if the same shall be lawfully demanded'. In reality this meant

paying a nominal amount probably for the tenancy and one wonders if the previous tenant Thomas Yates was related to my ancestor John Collier.

I was further helped in my research into the family history by my grandfather Edwin Collier's record made in 1942. According to the record John Collier's son James, my great great grandfather, first married a Miss Jenkinson from Fulford and they had two children, James baptised in 1833 and George. When his first wife died John Collier married a Miss Shipley from Stowe by Chartley who bore him five children John, Jane, Lucy, Isabella and Susan. When John Collier died he was succeeded at The Cock by his son, also John, from his second marriage. According to my grandfather Edwin Collier's record, "John Collier came to keep The Cock when his father died. He married Mary Cotterill of Kingstone and there were five or six children of the marriage when they parted and she refused to live with him again." Edwin seemed to think that John Collier the son drank the profits of the pub! James Collier, my great grandfather, was apprenticed for seven years to a saddler named James Cook, in Utttoxeter and in due course became a saddler himself in Stowe and later at Amerton. According to Edwin Collier's record of the Colliers the following shows what happened to the children of James' second marriage to Miss Shipley of Stowe:

John, who later became landlord of The Cock, was apprenticed to a draper

Jane married William Moreton of Coton and was childless,

Lucy married William Perkin, Farmer and Cattle Dealer of Mansty Farm, 'Penkridge Way'. He died suddenly leaving her 'well to do with a family of ten children'. She afterwards married a man named Ball.

Isabella married Henry Hale, 'a well to do farmer'. They had a family - Edwin Collier actually knew two of the daughters who were nurses at Stafford Asylum. The last he heard of this family they were on a small farm in the Lichfield District.

Susan married a farmer by the name of Chell from Penkridge. They had one daughter.

Edwin's history also tells us that James' brother George was apprenticed for the customary seven years to J.W.Crosby, a tailor in Stafford and that "when he came out of his time started in business as a Master Tailor in Wolverhampton. He married there and had family."

There was a son William who went abroad and was never heard of again.

In February 1852 my great grandfather James Collier, believed to be twenty six years old, married nineteen year old Elizabeth Chambers of Rugeley. Mr. Bryan Ellsmore, a friend of them both, gave her away. Her father was a sergeant in the British Army and was at the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Later, he held a senior post at Stafford Prison and perhaps was even Governor there. Elizabeth's mother had been a Miss Watson originally from Rugeley. The couple had two children Elizabeth, my great grandmother born in 1833, and a girl name unknown. According to my grandfather's record my great great grandfather Chambers turned out very wild and dissolute. Tragically both my great great grandparents died leaving Elizabeth and her sister orphans when they were only six or seven years old. They both came to live in Stowe about 1840 with a relative they called grandmother and a gentleman named William Yates. Was William any relation to Thomas



My great grandfather James Collier.

Yates who had been landlord of The Cock Inn before 1812? Again, Edwin Collier's record tells us that my great grandmother Elizabeth Chambers remembered her mother dying and that she used to speak about her. The two girls were given a good education either at a Dame or Ladies' School and were specially taught Needlework. Elizabeth is known to have had one uncle, Samuel Watson of Rugeley and his wife Mary Ann. At one period both of them came over once or twice every year. Grandfather Edwin Collier remembered Samuel Watson and used to call him Uncle Sam. He was a Master Tailor in business at Rugeley. Some disagreement arose when Elizabeth's grandparents in Rugeley died. After that visits ceased.

My great grandparents James and Elizabeth Collier had nineteen children. Once again Edwin, my grandfather, had the foresight to make a list of all the children who survived giving their names, dates of birth, and married names where appropriate. It would appear that there were five children who were stillborn. They all lived, unbelievably, at Ivy Cottage, Amerton. Edwin was apprenticed as a saddler to his father James and worked with him in the saddler's shop at Ivy Cottage.

Edwin Collier's record of what happened to the nineteen children of James and Elizabeth Collier of Amerton appears below:

- 1. George born in 1852. A saddler he worked in Rugeley and Walsall. About 1872 left to go to the Cape of Good Hope. He sent a letter from Liverpool saying he would write again in a few days. We never heard from him again. We did try to trace him.*



My great grandmother Elizabeth Collier (nee Chambers).

Children of James & Elizabeth
Walker of Amerton

- | | Born date |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1 George | June 28 th 1852 |
| 2 John | Sep 12 th 1854 |
| 3 James | Nov 29 th 1856 |
| 4 Jane (Plant) | Nov 12 th 1858 |
| 5 Edworn | Oct 21 th 1860 |

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 6 Elizabeth (Rogers) | Nov 23 rd 1862 |
| 7 Herbert | April 26 1865 |
| 8 Henry | July 15 th 1867 |
| 9 Catherine (Riley) | Aug 15 th 1869 |
| 10 Arthur | Jan 17 th 1871 |
| 10 Lucy (Middleton) | Dec 4 th 1873 |
| 15 Jessie (died) | |

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 13 Annie | ? Aug 6 th 1877 |
| 14 Esther | baptized died soon after birth |
| 5 Still-born & miscarriages | |

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2. John born in 1854. A saddler he started business in Upper Tean about 1877. Married Miss Esther Barlow of Little Haywood. There were seven children one son and six daughters. He died in 1927 aged 72 years.
3. James born 1856. A butcher he started business in Stafford. Married Miss Hannah Mountford daughter of a farmer from Cheddleton. Three children but she died in childbirth as did the infant. James second wife was a widow with four children Mrs. Eliza Dean formerly Hopper. There were five children by the second marriage four sons and a daughter. James and his wife and children went to Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. He died there in 1920 aged 64.

I would like to point out that two of James' children featured in the family as I know it to-day. By his first wife he had one daughter - the only one who survived - named Ethel Annie. She came back to England to look after Edwin's other children - her cousins - after their mother died. Ethel married John Halpin who was Governor of Stafford Workhouse. She died at Wombourne about 1970. She

was a delightful lady. By his second wife James had at least six children, one of whom, Elsie, had two daughters Jean and Joan. These two ladies, now widows, live in New England and we are good friends. We have met several times.

4. Jane born 1858 married Thomas Dalton Plant in Stafford. He was a currier with his father in Eastgate Street, Stafford. According to Chambers' Dictionary a currier is 'one who curries or dresses tanned leather.' There were nine children six sons and three daughters. One son died in infancy. Four of the sons served in the Great War, one Clement was killed in action. Jane died in 1939 aged 81.
5. Edwin, my grandfather who wrote the family record, was born on October 24, 1860. A saddler, he worked with his father. In 1892 he married Annie Dean who was then living in St. Mary's Grove and they set up home in Tipping Street and later at Elm Lodge, Bradley. They had five children but more of Edwin's life later.
6. Elizabeth born in 1862 married Samuel Rogers a farmer at Stone. He failed in farming and they

- emigrated to Cleveland about 1892. At that time they had one infant son but I believe they had nine children in Cleveland. Both parents died there.
7. Herbert born 1865. Saddler he started in business at Cradley Heath and married. Two sons of the marriage one a saddler and the other in - the word illegible. Herbert died in Cradley Heath.
8. Henry born 1867. Butcher he was in business for a short time in Stafford went out to Cleveland in 1891. He came over home for a month in 1895 and the following year Maud Dale of Lea went out to him. They were married in Cleveland. There were three children of the marriage when he died. His widow married again.
9. Catherine born in 1869 married Frederick Riley, the proprietor of a substantial shoe business in Stafford with premises in St. Patrick's Street and Gaol Road. They lived at Cheslyn House, Rowley Avenue in quite some style but sadly were childless. The Riley family had other shoemaking interests in Stafford.

10. Arthur born in 1871. Saddler he married Elizabeth Middleton. Six children four sons and two daughters.
11. Lucy born in 1873. She married William Middleton, farmer of Sandon. There were four children one son and three daughters.
12. Annie born in 1877 took up the nursing profession. She was of a roving disposition and would not be controlled in any way. She is married and lives in Rhodesia. Little is known about her or her husband. None of the family have seen her since 1916. She said she should have her own way.
13. Esther died a few months old.
14. Jessie lived only a few days. Five babies were presumably stillborn.

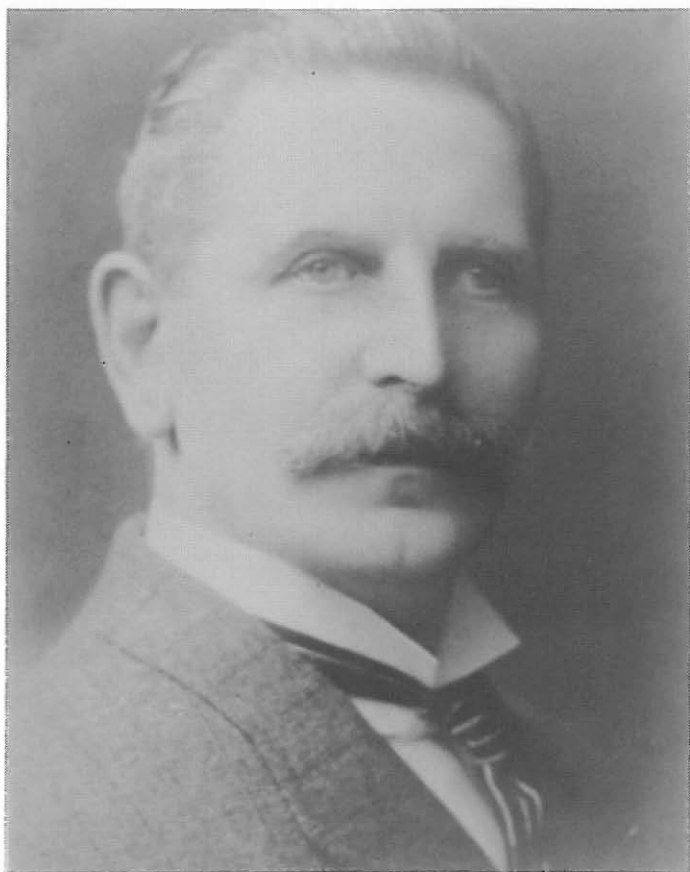
One of my cousins Charles Newman, the son of my father's sister Constance, was a doctor at Horton Hospital, Banbury. He had been an only child and when he died his widow found in his possessions his mother's snapshot album. In a number of photographs Charles' widow was unable to recognise the place or anyone in them so she passed them on to me. I was equally unsuccessful in identifying the photographs until I showed them to my aunt Ida, my father's other sister, who straight away told me that they were my great grandparents James and Elizabeth Collier. She was also able to identify Ivy Cottage, Amerton with my great grandmother Elizabeth Collier standing outside their house. It is a unique photograph of the family home taken about 1885 when the cottage was still thatched. There are two doors and one has a thatched



Ivy Cottage, or Saddlers Cottage, Amerton circa 1885. My great grandmother Elizabeth Collier is standing in front of the window. My great grandfather James Collier had a saddler's shop at the cottage. At that time Ivy Cottage was part of the Chartley Estate and James Collier probably worked for Earl Ferrers of nearby Chartley Hall.

porch. One might think that this was at the front of the cottage but the luxuriant vegetable garden tends to make me think the view is of the back of the house and the door with the thatched porch is the entrance to the Saddler's Shop. Ivy Cottage was bought by the Colliers in 1904 when most of the Chartley Estate was sold off in lots. I think it was bought by Arthur the saddler son who stayed at home. Until he died James Collier had been a tenant at Ivy Cottage. In the sales details the Saddler's Shop is described as being attached to the house. Ivy Cottage has also been known as Ivy House and Saddler's Cottage. The thatch caught fire about the time of World War Two and there was insufficient insurance or labour to have it re-thatched and so it was tiled. In 1960 Ivy Cottage was sold out of the Collier family. My great grandfather James Collier died on February 14, 1895 aged 69 and the grand old lady my great grandmother Elizabeth Collier lived on at Amerton for many years until her death on May 8, 1928 aged 95. I was told she dandled me on her knee when I was very tiny. It is wonderful to have found these photos of my great grandparents and their home at Amerton which could so easily have been lost forever.

As I related earlier my grandfather Edwin Collier married Annie Dean who was the daughter of George and Eliza Dean. Her maternal grandfather was Henry Jones of Stafford. Annie came from Great Bridgeford but lived at St.Mary's Grove, Stafford. They had one son, Charles Edwin, my father and four daughters Annie, Constance, Cecily and Ida. In 1888 my grandfather Edwin Collier left Amerton and moved into Stafford where he worked as a Rates and Tax Collector for Stafford Rural District, East Side and developed a rent 'collection' round at the same time. He took an office in Bank Passage, Stafford in 1895 and established an estate and house agency Edwin Collier & Son. At some time Edwin was Churchwarden at St.Mary's in Stafford. For forty one years, 1894-1935, he was Clerk to Berkswich Parish Council. At some time he was an officer of the Board of Guardians in the



My grandfather Edwin Collier.

town. Edwin's son, my father Charles Edwin Collier was Clerk to Berkswich Parish Council from 1935 to 1952. Unfortunately, I didn't continue the family tradition.

My grandmother Annie Collier died suddenly in 1910. Annie, the eldest child, with her American cousin Ettie looked after the younger children including my father Charles. Tragically Annie died of epilepsy at Cheddleton Hospital in 1915. She was just 22 years old. My grandfather Edwin retired from the family business Edwin Collier & Son in 1936 in favour of his son, Charles, my father. Edwin lived on the Eccleshall Road, Stafford. It was around around 1942 that he started to record the history of the Collier family starting with these words: “

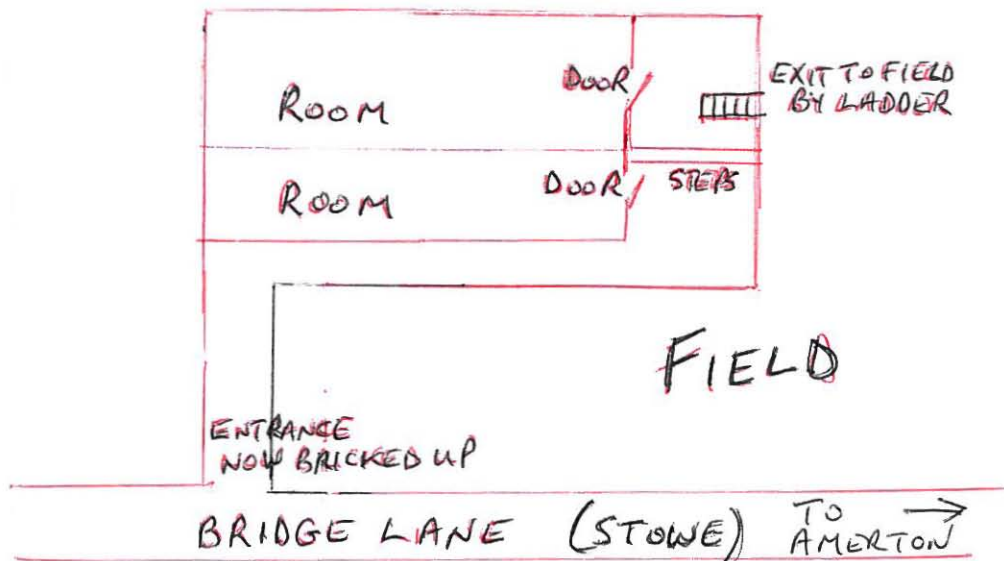
I am now writing as much as I know about it regretting that it was not done in the lifetime of Father and Mother who seldom talked about relatives.” He stood about six foot

high, a slim man who ‘walked tall’ all his life. He died later that year and was buried beside his dear wife at Bradley.

My father Charles Edwin Collier was born in 1896. He went to Stafford Grammar School and left aged 18 in July 1914. He served in France and Flanders in the Motor Machine Gun Corps, the Tank Corps and the Royal Flying Corps before the Great War ended. Only a handful of that year at the Grammar School survived beyond 1918. Charles married the Borough Treasurer's daughter, Clare Parker, in 1923. She had worked in Barclays Bank and in 1917 had been one of the first women to be employed by the bank. When my father came out of the Royal Flying Corps he was employed in his father's office. He set about qualifying as a rating valuer and expanding the business his father Edwin Collier had built up over some twenty eight years. He had three surviving sisters, Constance, Cecily and Ida. Constance married Sam Newman, a senior switchgear engineer with English Electric. They had one son. Cecily, who became deputy head of a senior teacher training college, never married. Ida married John Holt, the only non-

family director of Venables, Timber Merchants of Stafford. He died about 1975 but Ida is still alive in 1999 and remarkably well aged 95. She has been of considerable help to me in discussing the history of the Collier family. My parents Charles and Clare Collier had four children, David, myself born in 1925. John and Rosemary. After war service in the Navy I joined the family estate agency business and after my father died in 1952 I carried on with it until I retired in 1991. My wife and I have eight children, four sons and four daughters. We have so far eleven grandchildren and so perhaps the Colliers of Stowe by Chartley may survive a few more generations. Who knows there may be one of them who will write another sort of family history. We live at Colwich about an hour's walk from Stowe by Chartley. I can truthfully claim to be "Staffordshire born and Staffordshire bred, strong in the arm but weak in the head." Maybe this describes the true Stowie.

Tradition has it that Robin Hood was Robin of Locksley – possibly the Loxley near Uttoxeter – and that he married Maid Marion at Loxley. As the central piece for the patio in the courtyard of our house at Colwich are some ancient wooden trusses set in the ground which came from an old barn at Loxley Hall. A friend of mine was demolishing the barn and asked me if I wanted the trusses. With the help of my son Freddy I put the trusses together to form the central piece. Not many people can claim to have a connection with Robin Hood in their back garden. But I have another more interesting connection with an equally famous historical figure. There is a family tradition that one of our Collier ancestors was a guard to Mary, Queen of Scots, when she was imprisoned at Chartley Hall. It's interesting that Chartley Hall is not far from our old family home at Amerton.



Plan of a wartime underground bunker under a field off Bridge Lane, Stowe by Chartley as drawn by Albert Marston.

On the surface it looks like a wartime concrete pillbox of the type used to defend important positions.

In the following story on page 160 Ada Mary Johnson refers to an underground storage area for bombs. Was she referring to this bunker or another one at Amerton?

Albert Marston gives us more details of the bunker in his story on page 117.

The next cottage along the road was once the home of the Johnson family. A few yards from the family home on the corner of the A518 and Dimmocks Lane was the village smithy for Amerton. I believe there used to be a post box built into the wall of the building. The building is gone but there is still a post box on the corner. Before the airfield was built this lane took you across the old Stafford-Utttoxeter railway line and down to the London Road at Shirleywich. The Greaves family live up this lane and nearby is a small private airfield used by local businessmen. We now take up Ada Mary Johnson's story.

ADA MARY JOHNSON'S STORY

Amerton Blacksmith's Shop,
Thatched Cottages at Stowe, Old Toll House,
Up Weston Bank in a horse and dray, Village tragedy
Hixon Airfield, Bomb store at Amerton,
Bomber crash, Bl~~o~~ snow of 1940,
My husband George, 29 years as gardener at Chartley

My name is Ada Mary Johnson (nee Turner). I was born on 21 July 1905 at Preston on the Whield Moors, near Wellington, Salop. My parents Thomas and Mary Elizabeth (nee Bellingham) Turner came from Oulton, Norbury. I had four brothers, Harry, Jack, Jim and Tom and four sisters, Norah, Katie, Dorothy and Ivy.

In 1923 my father Thomas Turner got a job as herdsman for Mr. Major at Amerton Farm which was then part of the Chartley Estate. We lived in a cottage next to the blacksmith's shop on the main Stafford - Uttoxeter Road by Dimmock's Lane, Amerton. The blacksmith was William Johnson and he served all the surrounding farms and villages, including Stowe by Chartley and Amerton.

The Johnsons lived in one of four thatched cottages at the crossroads in Stowe by Chartley. The cottages were owned by Mr. Mundy who owned the Salt Works at Stafford Common. Opposite on one side was the Cross Keys pub and on the other side of the crossroads by the Church was Stowe by Chartley Post Office.

In the middle of the row of thatched cottages was one that we called the Old Lady's Cottage because it had just the one room downstairs and one upstairs. Those cottages have now been made into one house. Recently the house was badly damaged by fire but fortunately it has been restored, thatch and all.



William Johnson who had a blacksmith's shop at Amerton with Elsie Lawrence who later married William's son Fred Johnson.

Photo courtesy Fred and Elsie's son Lawrence Johnson and taken at Chartley Bank Farm.

It was when we moved to Amerton that I met my future husband George James Johnson, born on 3 November 1908 whose father was the village blacksmith. My husband had three sisters, Nellie, Annie and Alice and three brothers, Bill, Bob and Fred.

People by the name of Massey lived in the old Toll House on the Stafford - Uttoxeter road at the junction with Station Road. I was told that in olden days anyone travelling along the road had to pay a fee and farmers had to pay for every herd of cattle or horse and cart they took past the Toll House.

In my time Mrs. Massey used to sell ginger beer at 1d. a glass. We'd knock on the side door and Mrs. Massey would open a window and sell the drinks from there.

I used to run errands for a blind lady who lived at Tinkerborough.

We used to go shopping in Stafford and we'd travel there in a horse and dray. At Weston Bank we often had to get off and push. Nowadays cars drive up the hill with little effort and most people in cars aren't aware of what a haul it is.

On 2 November 1934 I married George James Johnson at St. John the Baptist, Stowe by Chartley. We went to live in one of the thatched cottages at the crossroads at Stowe. Our cottage was the end one nearest the Cross Keys pub. My husband's aunt kept the pub. It was later sold as a private house but you can still see the step in the wall where the door used to be and I believe the cellars are still there.

Miss Preston ran Stowe Post Office for years and years. When she died my husband's parents, the Johnsons, went to live there.

W. O. Eaton

A. W. Johnson
Blacksmith

1914

Jan 28 2 shoes

Feb 12 2 shoes (23) 2 shoes

Mar 10 1 remove (24) 4 shoes

Apr 14 1 remove (28) 2 shoes (24) 2 shoes

May 23 4 shoes

June 14 2 shade trees & putting in

30 4 shoes

1 cow & hay

* s d

1 b

30

a 35

35

30

28

30

30

\$ 1210

Received With Thanks

A. W. Johnson July 19/1914

My mother-in-law, Mrs. Johnson, used to lay out the bodies of people who had died in preparation for burial. I remember her laying out the body of Miss Price, Mrs. Preston's sister, who had choked to death while eating. It was a terrible tragedy and shocked everyone in the village. She is buried at Stowe by Chartley Churchyard.

The Colliers lived in the black and white cottage nextdoor to us. David Perry now lives in the cottage we used to live in. The blacksmith's shop is gone.

There was a baker's shop at Weston run by a family named Spencer and we got all our bread from there.

The Station Master at Stowe by Chartley was Mr. Smith and he lived in the Station Master's House which is still there but is now a private dwelling. The old railway line is long gone but we used it regularly to go shopping in Stafford. It cost 6d. to Stafford. Mr. Smith had one son, Bob.

A Mr. Harris lived at Chartley Hall. When Major Congreve came back from the First World War he bought Chartley Hall and Estate.

The Plough pub at Amerton was run by Jack Robinson.

My husband George was called up in 1940 and served with the 95th Royal Artillery. He was sent abroad and ended up in Judea.

About this time Hixon Airfield was built and a lot of farmland was taken over by the Government and covered in concrete. Dimmocks Lane by the side of Amerton blacksmith's shop used to run from Amerton right through to Shirleywich on the Stone - Lichfield Road but unfortunately it ran right through the path of one of the runways and was closed.

A tunnel went under the road near our house to an underground storage area where the RAF stored bombs for the bombers at Hixon Airfield. There was a sentry box by the entrance to the bunker near our house and there was always a sentry on duty. We didn't know about the underground bomb store until after the war. Everything was very hush-hush in those days.

During the 1939-1945 war I used to see planes taking off and landing at the airfield. There were quite a few plane crashes. One day a plane crashed near Chartley in a field opposite the Toll House. We saw it come down on fire. It exploded when it crashed. Four British airmen were killed. We found out it had been on a bombing mission to Germany. It is terrible to think they had been all the way to Germany and back and had crashed at the last moment. My husband told me the plane was full of holes from the German anti-aircraft fire.

In the winter of 1940 we were snowed in - all the roads were blocked - my husband had been called up and we had no bread. My sister Ivy and I walked, trudged would be a better word for the snow was above our knees, from Amerton to Weston to fetch bread for the village. We used sticks to help us through the snow and on the way back we used the sticks on our shoulders to carry back the bread. We were the only ones to get through. When we got back the whole village was waiting for us.

After the war my husband was a gardener for the Johnsons who owned Chartley Hall and the Chartley Estate. We lived in the gardener's cottage near the greenhouse at Chartley for 29 years. Bert Evans and his wife May who still live in the area both worked on the estate, he as a farmhand and May at the Hall. My husband died on 6 July 1992. He'd been ill for a few years.

I have four sons, Derrick, Donald, David and Dennis, one daughter Norah who is now dead, fourteen grandchildren and I've lost count of the number of great-grandchildren.

90th birthday ¹⁹⁹⁰ celebration is an international affair

RELATIVES from around the world joined in the celebrations for Ada Mary Johnson's 90th birthday.

Her grandson Paul came especially from America to be with her on the big day and she also had a chance to meet some of her 32 great-grandchildren.

Mrs Johnson (pictured) used to live at Hixon, near Stafford, but four years ago moved to Roseneath Residential Home in Stone with her husband George.

Bridget Hill, care shift leader at Roseneath, said: "George has since died, but Mary is still quite



active despite having one or two poorly spells.

"George worked as a gardener at Chartley Hall in Stowe-by-Chartley and Mary assisted him there and also worked as an expert poultry plucker."

Sadly Mrs. Ada Johnson died at Stafford District Hospital on Friday April 19, 1994 after a short illness.

As we continue our journey towards Stafford we can immediately see Amerton Farm on our right hand side which takes us to the next story on Amerton Farm.

THE SENTINEL, Tuesday, July 18, 1995



●Former Farming Woman of the Year Anne Williams and friend.
Picture: Malcolm Hart

AMERTON FARM

ONE WOMAN'S DREAM

Local tourist attraction – created by Anne Williams. 1983 sign Fresh Cream For Sale drew passing motorists. 1996 100,000 visitors to Amerton Working Farm – many attractions including tea-room, craft shop, wildlife centre, arrival of Amerton Railway and Isobel the steam engine. Anne's dream to educate city people about farm life – roast beef and the Mad Cow scare – impact of farm on local community. 1989 Anne Farming Woman of the Year. 1995 C.B.E. for Anne in Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Amerton Farm about six miles from Stafford on the A518 is a well-known tourist attraction. Day trippers from as far afield as Birmingham and Manchester, retired people in coaches on a day's outing, junior school children on a field trip or parents looking for something to occupy their children at the week-end all add to the increasing number of visitors to Amerton each year.

Originally set up by Anne Williams as Amerton Working Farm it has grown and developed beyond her wildest dreams. In 1983 Anne put a simple sign at the entrance to Amerton Farm – Fresh Jersey Cream for Sale – it read. The fresh cream came from her husband Harry's herd of Jersey cows which visitors could watch being milked in the special viewing room

at the farm. It was no different from hundreds of similar signs outside farms up and down the British Isles. Passers-by stopped to buy the fresh cream and stayed to watch the milking or look at the calves. The handful of visitors became a flood with over 100,00 visitors in 1996.

From selling fresh cream Amerton Working Farm grew into a small business with a tea room, a farm shop, a bakery, a craft shop, a small garden centre, a wildlife centre and even its own nature trail. The garden centre expanded and now has indoor and outdoor sections.

The herd of 120 cows were milked sixteen at a time by a machine with the whole operation taking two hours. The equivalent time by hand would have taken three men three hours each to milk the herd. Some of the milk was used to produce the farm's own prize ice cream and fresh cream.

The farm bakery produced bread, cakes and pies for sale in the shop and for the tea-room.

Amerton Tea Room became extremely popular. The building was once a cow shed and once again Anne Williams' vision was responsible for creating a tastefully furnished tea room while still retaining some of the original features of the cow shed. The hay loft was added by Anne and adds to the character of the room.

Chicken dinners followed by roast beef and Yorkshire pudding are still to-day the most popular Sunday lunches served in the 120 seater tea room. For one week during the BSE or mad cow scare roast beef dinners dropped to an all time but soon returned to normal. Steak and kidney pie is another popular dish with visitors.

Soon after it opened Amerton Working Farm had a great impact on the local community. With its complementary small business and heritage groups it had a turnover of over half a million pounds per year and employed sixty full time and twenty five part-time staff and during the summer months a number of season casual staff.



A photo of Amerton Farm when it was Amerton Working Farm.

Amerton has never ceased to develop over the years. When the cows were ready for milking they were herded into the ivy-covered building while waiting to be milked in the milking room on the right hand corner. At this point there was a viewing room where visitors could watch the process. All this area has now been converted into shop floors with offices upstairs. At one time you could park your car on the farmyard. With the increase in visitors a new car park had to be built and then extended. In the summer the swallows used to swoop down over the farmyard, cutting through the archway on the left of the ivy-covered building, to their nests in the eaves of the building. I think they probably still come to Amerton every summer.

In 1995 the car park was extended to cater for 200 cars and the entrance and the exit for vehicles improved. The long hot summer of that year attracted far more cars with than was ever thought possible and the adjoining fields had to be used as overflow car parks.

Anne Williams, nee Bagnall, originally came from Birmingham. She trained as a secretary in Birmingham and did part-time social research projects in Birmingham and Wolverhampton. This research re-affirmed the need to educate city people about farm life and spurred Anne on to create her dream of a farm where people could come and see what it was really like.

When Anne's engineer father, Bernard Bagnall, found work with JCB at Rocester the family moved to Uttoxeter. Eighteen year old Anne obtained a job as secretary to Alfred Johnson of Chartley Hall. Mr. Johnson owned the large Chartley Estate which included most of the surrounding farms and farmland. While she was working for Mr. Johnson she met Harry Williams one of his tenant farmers. Harry farmed with his father at Sun Farm, Fradswell.

In 1962 Anne Bagnall and Harry Williams married. In 1969 Mr. Johnson offered them the opportunity of buying Amerton Farm in exchange for the tenancy of Sun Farm. They bought Amerton and this was to be the first step in making Anne's dream a reality.

Part of Anne's original scheme was to make city dwellers, and children in particular, more aware of modern farming. Anne was aware that many city children only saw milk coming out of a bottle or carton and had never seen a cow at close quarters. Their concept of a cow was what they saw on their television screens and when they did see a real live cow they were always amazed at how large it actually was. Anne's husband Harry wasn't very keen on the idea of hundreds of people tramping across his farmyard and besides a cow shed wasn't a very good place to see up a tea room. Anne didn't give up her dream.

In 1982 Anne was involved in a road accident and while she was recovering from her injuries she had plenty of time on her hands. It was during that period that the idea of a working farm at Amerton began to evolve.

By January 1984 Anne had persuaded her husband and the planners at Stafford that the redundant cow shed would be ideal for a tea room for visitors who came to see a farm in action – a working farm.

Although Anne and Harry later divorced they still co-operated in the running of the farm. While Anne ran the Working Farm Harry looked after his herd of 120 Jersey Milkers and once a day visitors could watch the cows being milked from a special area in the milking parlour.

People travelled for miles to enjoy the taste of Amerton's own ice cream.

There was no end to the ideas for developing Amerton under Anne's drive and vision. She offered the Staffordshire Narrow Gauge Railway Society the opportunity to set up Amerton Railway on her land. Amerton Railway is very popular with children especially at week-ends when the steam engine Isobel pulls the open-air carriages back and forth along the short narrow gauge track. Isobel was built in 1895 by W.G.Bagnall in Stafford and for many years stood near Victoria Park in Stafford before it was rescued and restored to full working order by the society.

A few years ago Amerton Railway had the good fortune to purchase the old platform waiting room from Stowe by Chartley Station where trains from the long defunct Stafford-Utttoxeter Line, the old Clog and Knocker, once stopped. It has been carefully restored and gives a touch of authenticity to the one mile long rail track.

Amerton Wildlife and Rescue Centre was established at the farm in 1991. Its founder Alf Hardy has good reason to be proud of his venture which over the years has helped to save hundreds of wild animals and birds.



● The popular miniature railway at Amerton Farm

In the days before the curriculum and the incessant testing of school children Amerton was on the itinerary of junior schools for their field trips. Anne was able to offer the school children a classroom where they could work on their projects while visiting the farm. That led to a book about the farm called Amerton Farm Mystery written by the pupils from Fulfer Primary School, Burntwood. Another idea of Anne's was to set up the Amerton Farm Trail a specially designed nature trail which helped children to learn about the countryside.

In 1989 Anne Williams was chosen as Farming Woman of the Year by Farmers Weekly and received her certificate from the Rt.Hon.Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first woman Prime Minister at the Royal Show, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List for 1995 Anne was awarded a C.B.E. in recognition of her services to agriculture. In July 1997 Harry sold off his precious herd of Jersey cows and retired after fifty four years of farming. That same year Anne handed over the running of Amerton Farm to her son Paul and his wife Sarah. Paul bought the last Jersey cow from his father's herd. With its calf it is now a favourite in the Children's Farmyard along with a couple of goats, a breeding sow with piglets and the usual ducks, hens and chickens.

The cow shed where the cows waited to be milked and the milking room where visitors could watch the herd being milked are now gone converted into a large shop selling a wide range of goods from ice creams to cards and craft work. Anne William's vision for Amerton Farm became a reality and grew beyond her wildest dreams. Although it is no longer a working farm it has never lost its roots and hasn't become tacky and over-commercialised. Long may Amerton Farm continue to attract visitors and in so doing support the local economy.

In 1995 Anne was awarded the O.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to agriculture.



ANNE Williams of Amerton Farm, Stowe-by-Chartley, Stafford, has won the dairy class in the BOCM Silcock Farming Woman of the Year competition.

Held for the first time this year, in association with Farmers Weekly and the Women's Farming Union, the award seeks to acknowledge farming women who are actively meeting changes in the industry, whose drive and creative ability have brought success to a farm.

Commenting on her selection at the Award's presentation held at the Royal Show, BOCM Silcock chairman, Mike Cowan, said Mrs Williams' success is as a result of her maxim of putting the customer first in her highly popular farm activity complex.

Apart from the prestigious class award presented by the Prime Minister, Anne also recieved a cheque for £500.

"The competition was very tough. I am delighted to have won the class and welcome the recognition the award gives to farming women," said Anne.

An ex-brummie, Anne helps her husband run a dairy farm which they opened to the public in 1984. By 1988, 120,000 visitors a year were being received, providing full time employment for 16 staff and part time jobs for 20 and an annual turnover of £405,000.

The farm buildings were converted to provide a tea-room, a bakery, ice-cream room, farm shop and school room and in 1988 cheesemaking commenced on site and a farm trail was opened.

In addition to this activity, Anne holds conferences at Amerton Farm to explain her methods and contributes to several committees on Food and Farming. Last year she chaired Staffordshire WFU.

Milk farmer Harry steps down after 54 years

By Job Cotterill

A FARMER who built up one of the best known Jersey herds in Staffordshire is retiring after more than half a century.

Harry Williams, aged 70, is hanging up his wellies after 54 years of milking cows.

Mr Williams — who has been at Amerton Farm between Stafford and Uttoxeter — for 28 years has already sold the majority of the 120-strong herd.

A group of 10 are remaining at the farm until they are transported to the Isle of Man.

Visitors who flock to the working farm from across the county where able to see the cows being milked.

Mr Williams started farming with his father at Fradswell and they walked the 60-strong herd to Amerton when they bought the farm in 1969.

He said: "The biggest shame is that I have had to dispose of the herd but I am 70 now and don't feel like milking 120 cows every day."



● Harry Williams with the last of his cows

Mr Williams together with his former wife Anne and their eldest son Paul set up the farm in 1986 and now attract 150,000 visitors a year.

Paul is to continue to run the centre while his father plans to retire to the nearby village of Weston.

The sale of the remaining farm machinery and dairy equipment takes place at the farm on Saturday July 26.

THE SENTINEL, Saturday, July 12, 1997

Tourism boost at village pub

by Eben Smith

A husband and wife team plan to add holidaymakers' chalets to the back of their pub after winning approval from councillors.

Pat and Malcolm Cooper, who run the Plough Inn at Amerton, want to turn outbuildings into six bedrooms with en suite facilities for tourists.

Councillors decided to give the proposal the go-ahead after a site visit on Friday.

But the members were recommended to refuse the application on the grounds that it was against the Local Plan, contrary to tourism policies in the Staffordshire Structure Plan and it would have a detrimental effect on the rural area.

Now work will start on renovating the out-buildings, said Mrs Cooper.

She said: "We always have people asking us if we have residential facilities.

"We've got Skagborough, the County Showground and Alton Towers nearby - accommodation is much needed in this area."

The Coopers, who have been at the Plough for four years with their son and daughter Darren and Joanne, say they have made improvements to the pub by adding a new bar.

Pat added: "The out buildings are already there, we just want to tidy up the area and make a nicer view."

On Thursday January 1, 1993 a male driver aged 48 was killed when his car was in collision with a goods vehicle at the junction of the A518 and Amerton Lane.

On Thursday January 9, 1969 at 6.05 p.m. a 23 year old male pedestrian was killed when he was struck by a vehicle near The Plough Inn.

On Sunday March 23, 1997 a male driver aged 17 suffered a serious injury when his motor cycle was in collision with another motor bike near The Plough Inn.

We're coming to the end of our journey along the A518 but first we'll hear the stories of Edith Deavall and Lillian Bailey from Gayton.

EDITH DEAVALL'S STORY

1931 walking from Gayton along the Stafford-Utttoxeter road to school at Stowe.

My name is Edith Deavall. I was born in Gayton in 1924. My parents were Robert and Annie Moseley, nee Chiltern. My father had a smallholding of about twenty acres at Post Office Farm in Gayton. I had one older brother, George. I've a younger sister Doris.

I first went to school at Gayton when I was five. There was only one teacher, Mrs. Ward, who was a jolly sort of woman. She lived in the school house adjoining the village school. Gayton School was for children up to eleven years old. From there they went to either Stowe School or Weston School. When my brother was nine my father sent him to Stowe School and I had to go with him. I was only seven. We used to walk from Gayton to Stowe in all weathers. You were prepared for bad weather in those days and wore wellingtons and sou'westers. Sometimes we'd take a shortcut across the fields and come out on the Stafford-Utttoxeter road where the Gayton road splits in two.

There were a few other children from the Gayton who also went to school in Stowe. Some children were eleven when they went to Stowe. I was one of the younger ones. The teachers at Stowe School were Mr. Prince, the head master, Miss Prince, no relation, and Miss Green. Miss Green taught the infants, Miss Prince taught the juniors and Mr. Prince taught the seniors.

If your feet got wet on the way to school Mr. Prince would find a change of stockings.

In those days you went to school until you were fourteen.

While I was at Stowe School it became a Junior School and as I was too old at thirteen I had to go to Colwich School. Fortunately, we were taken there by bus. When we walked to school at Stowe we'd walk along the main road. It wasn't very busy. There were a few cars and lorries but it was mostly horses and carts.

The Tavernors ran The Plough at Amerton while across the road at Amerton Farm was the Lindup family.

We used to pass the blacksmith's shop on the corner of Dimmock's Lane at Amerton. It was a single storey building with a cottage alongside. There was a little bridge by the corner with Amerton Brook running beneath. Mr. Edwards, the blacksmith, lived in a cottage further along. Most days after school we would call in to the smithy. Mr. Edwards never grumbled. We used to help him by blowing the bellows. He made his own horseshoes. Farmers and people in the Gayton area would take their horse to Mr. Edwards to be shod.

A little further along the road we'd pass Ivy Cottage where the Colliers lived. Sometimes, on our way home we'd see Mr. Collier in his cottage garden full of lots of old fashioned flowers. He was a very gentlemanly type of man. He had a long waxed moustache and looked distinguished. He'd always have a word with us. After Ivy Cottage we'd turn right up Bridge Lane. When we got to the bridge over the railway line we could see the clock at Stowe Church. We then knew whether we had to run or not in order to get to school on time.

We used to go past The Cock Inn where Mrs. Hilda Robinson used to sell sweets. I remember Victory V lozenges and Fishermen's Friends. She was a short stoutish sort of woman. The Horobin family lived at the Toll House at the bottom of Station Road where it meets the main road. They had one son, Cyril, who was about four years younger than me. There was a vicar who was lame and rode a three wheeler bike. I can't recall his name.

The Robinsons, from Stowe, ran a bus service from Gayton to Stafford on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The last bus from Stafford on Saturdays was at 8 o'clock. The bus started at the Jubilee Tree in Gayton. The Hollins family who lived in Gayton also ran a bus service but I can't remember which days their buses used to run.

I used to go to Mr.Ash's shop at Weston. His shop was also the local telephone exchange.

VILLAGE NEWS

Golden couple celebrate in style

GOLDEN couple Arthur and Harriet Goodwin arrived in style when they celebrated their long marriage recently.

To mark their golden wedding anniversary their daughter Barbara Hollins, 38, arranged for a stretch limousine to drive them to Ingestre for a celebration meal with family.

During an hour long luxury cruise, Mr Goodwin, 82, and Mrs Goodwin, 77, stopped off

outside the church where they married - the exact time they got married 50 years ago.

The Stafford couple married in September 1949 at Kingstone church and farmed at Mill Farm, Gayton, near Stafford, until retiring to Mount Pleasant, Gayton, in 1986.

Barbara Hollins said: "I think they were very surprised. We had a lovely meal and a fantastic day."



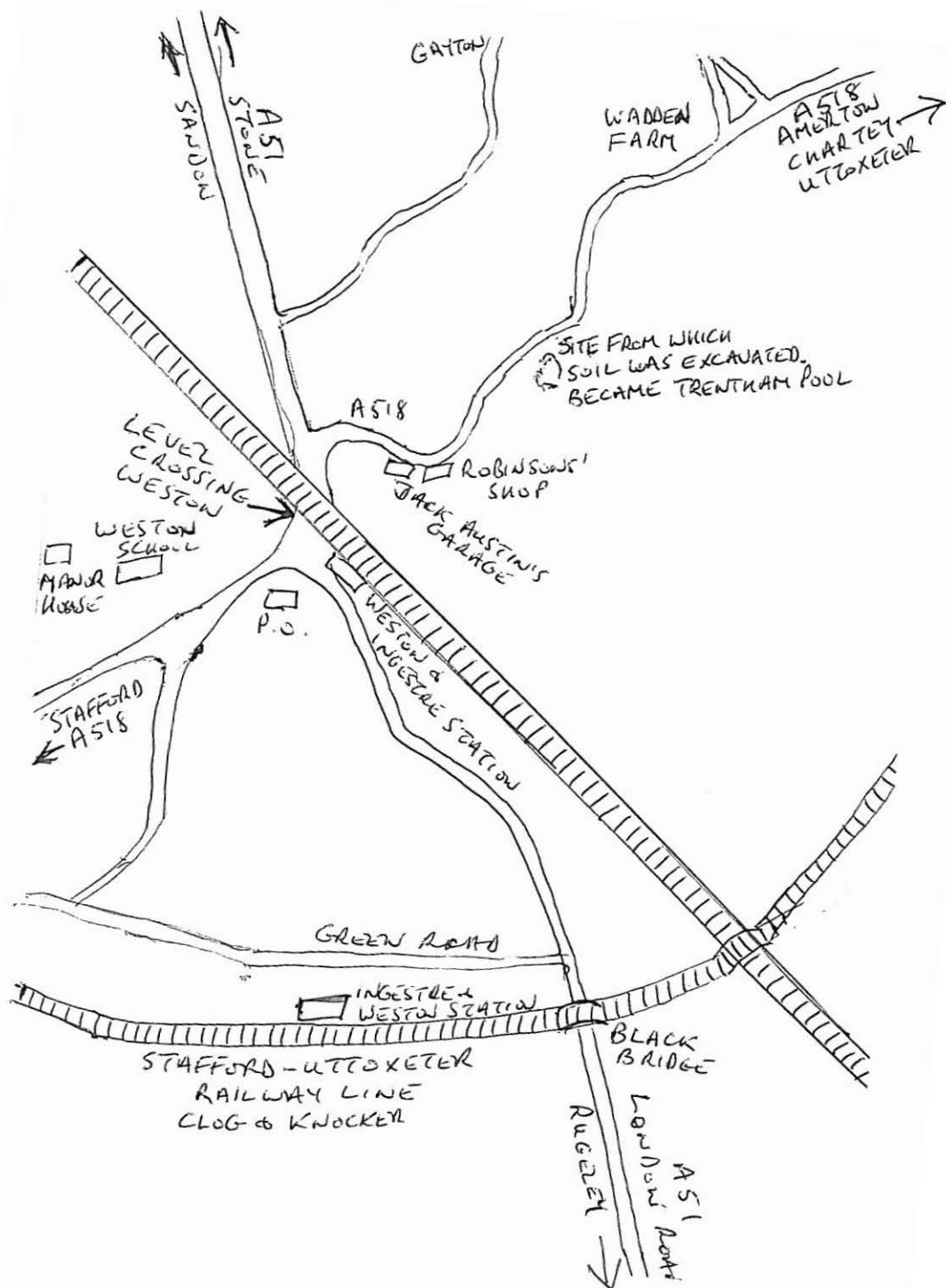
CHEERS: Harriet and Arthur Goodwin celebrate their special day with their three children and six grandchildren.

While driving towards Weston from Amerton I'd often noticed cars parked on the grass verge near a small wooded area about half a mile from the junction of the A518 with the A51. I often wondered why they were there.

One Summer's evening I decided to stop and investigate. I made my way through the small wooded area to find a large pool surrounded by trees. I noticed a lone angler on one of the banks opposite. I walked round the pool through the trees to chat to him. He told me the pool was reserved for employees of Universal Grindings of Doxey, Stafford. I thanked the man, took some photos of this little oasis, only yards from the busy A518, and continued my journey towards Weston.



A lone angler enjoys the solitude at the little oasis just off the A518.



LILLIAN BAILEY'S STORY

Trentham Pool, Building the bridge over the railway line at Weston, Mr and Mrs. Robinson's shop, Jack Austin's garage, Flooded fields and bits of the old road.

My name is Lillian Bailey, nee Martin. I was born in Gayton in 1927. My father was a cousin of Wilmot Martin of Hixon, the Staffordshire 'Harry Lauder'.

I can remember in the thirties a field by the side of the Stafford-Uttoxeter road being excavated to provide the foundations for a bridge over the level crossing at Weston. Four roads went across the railway line – the roads to Rugeley, Stafford, Uttoxeter and Stone.

On Sundays as a family we used to walk from Gayton to the Methodist Chapel on the main road on the other side of the railway line at Weston. Sometimes we used to take a short cut across the fields. One Sunday, when the embankment was being built for the bridge at Weston, my father and I climbed up the embankment on our way to the chapel. Suddenly my legs sank into the soil. My father pulled me out very quickly indeed but he was very frightened by the experience.

It's strange really how people of my age still refer to the bridge at Weston as the 'New Bridge'. When the bridge was first built there were just two lanes. The other two were added later.

When the field at the side of the Stafford-Uttoxeter road had been excavated it left a very big hole. It was made into a pool which we called Trentham Pool after the builders of the bridge. At one time the pool used to be hired out for fishing.

When the bridge was built over the railway line to replace the level crossing, the Uttoxeter end of the road was moved to join the A51 further north, leaving a section of the old road which goes round in a semi-circle. To-day it seems so narrow compared to the present A518. There was a small shop and a garage along this old road backing onto the railway goods yard for the London Midland Scottish or LMS line. On the other side of the railway line was the passenger platform for the LMS Weston and Ingestre Station.

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson ran the shop – a corrugated iron affair – where they sold sweets, cigarettes and cups of tea. Every day the Robinsons used to cycle from Fradswell to their shop. Tragically, Mrs. Robinson was knocked over and killed at Gayton Lane End as she was riding her bicycle.

Next to the shop was Jack Austin's garage where he did car repairs and sold petrol. Once the road was moved, traffic no longer went up the old road, and more than likely this led to the closure of the shop and the garage. To-day there is a caravan business and a haulage company down the old road. There was another railway station in Weston near where the village hall is to-day. It was called Ingestre and Weston Station and was on the old Stafford to Uttoxeter line part of the old London North and Eastern Region railway - the LNER. United Dairies had a factory at the side of the line. During the Second World War the factory was used to make potted meat.

In the thirties the fields at Amerton behind The Plough used to flood regularly during heavy and prolonged rain. All the water came down from Fradswell and flooded the Stafford-Uttoxeter road near Wadden Farm. By the gate to Wadden Farm you can see another an old section of the road which was by-passed when the road was straightened near here.

P.C. THOMAS WOOLASTON'S STORY - 1884

Amusing Chase and Capture of a Prisoner
charged with stealing a watch

Thomas Woolaston was a policeman in Stafford in the last century. In 1884 after serving in the police in various ranks for thirty years and ten months he wrote a book about his life entitled, 'Police Experiences and Reminiscences of Official Life'. The following chapter taken from the book is about an arrest on the road to Uttoxeter.

The principles of good detective work portrayed by P.C. Thomas Woolaston are still the same today despite the huge increase in technology in the ensuing hundred years.

Today P.C. Woolaston would be more likely to face disciplinary charges for his racist views. Ironically it is also more likely that the prisoner's colonial descendants, if he has any, would be proud of this ancestor, not for his crime, but for the ridiculous penal system of the mother country. A large proportion of the population of Australia is descended from convicts sentenced to transportation.

"On my coming to the Police Station for my usual turn of day duty, the Superintendent addressing me said, "Come, Woolaston, here is another job for you, let us see if you will be more fortunate in this than the last."

He then supplied me with particulars just received from a man who had recently left. "Mind", said he, "there is a pound reward if you succeed in getting the property and arresting the thief." He proceeded, "The man who has been here has reported that he was this morning employed thrashing in a barn at the house of a farmer near Stafford Castle and that his watch,

having been injured and ceased going, he had put it in his dinner basket, hanging the latter on a peg in a cow shed near; that when he went to take out his dinner at noon, the watch had been stolen. He had fully satisfied himself that no person on the premises had taken it, but said he suspected an Irishman who had called seeking employment and who had passed the cowshed. He further said that on missing it he had come direct to Stafford and had learned that the man he suspected had also come towards that town; he had also given information of his loss to pawnbrokers and watchmakers and obtained the maker's name and number of his watch."

This case had happened not within the Municipal Borough for which the Police then acted. Notwithstanding this, the man was told the matter should have attention. A fairly good description of the personal appearance and dress of the suspected thief was given but many Irish labourers were at the time moving about, it being the harvest season. I had no special instructions given to go beyond the limits of the Borough, but merely to keep a lookout for such man, if he arrived in town.

I saw no result would be likely to follow this and accordingly went a distance on the various roads until I met one or more persons who had travelled in an opposite direction. To these I put questions, with a view of ascertaining if the man whom I described had been met by them.

I have often found that persons so questioned give good and truthful information.

On the present occasion I found the man I was searching for had been met on Weston Bank, about four miles from Stafford.

I at once hurried on, on foot, to Weston-on-Trent. On that day a Club Meeting was being holden there and great numbers of persons about.

Amongst these I searched, also through public houses, without result. I made a small purchase at one of the several fruit and cake stalls and there learned that an Irishman of the description given had, about an hour previously, bought a couple of oranges, afterwards proceeding towards the toll-bar beyond.

Here I was at a loss. I could get no information from the toll-gate keeper and the road diverging in four different directions, he might have proceeded by any one of them. I tried all for short distances without result. Ultimately I selected the one upon which I found several pieces of orange peel as the most likely from the fact of his having purchased the oranges. That led to Uttoxeter. I then made a sort of forced march along this for three miles when I came within sight of my man.

I called at a cottage and obtained the loan of a countryman's coat and straw hat. Divesting myself of Police uniform and donning these and leaving my uniform at the cottage I then pursued hotly, occasionally across fields to avoid being noticed. My reason for this was, if the man had noticed me hurrying after him he may have suspected and hurled the watch (if he had it) away. I at length came up to him almost unobserved, when rounding a corner. He was a stout, burly, sullen-looking fellow, a fair type of his country, and it occurred to me that if he resisted I should be overmatched. To save this I thought it better to resort to a little stratagem. I walked beside him some distance, talking of the weather and harvest operations and the employment of labourers, thinking thereby to draw from him something by which I could judge where he had been working or seeking employment. I failed in this, he being apparently cautious and wary. I enquired from him the distance to next town; of this he professed to be ignorant and I next desired to know if he could kindly tell me the hour of the day. He replied, "No", but, turning his head, he said, he thought, by looking at the sun, it was four o'clock.

I, of course, doubting his correctness in thus judging time, said I thought not, but asked him to look at his watch, to assure me. He told me he had not a watch; and, glancing across, I could not see any appendage indicating the contrary.

A man with a cart was now meeting us and I selected this as a favourable time for action. Stepping quickly in front I told him to stop; that I was a Police Officer and must search him. He objected, but I persisted. Seizing his trousers at the fob, I soon convinced myself he had a watch and that he had turned the chain inward to conceal it. He held on stoutly and refused to let me have it. I tried to coax it from him, telling him I wanted to inspect it only and would return it; but "No," he would not loose it. At this time up came the man with the cart and I solicited his assistance, stating who I was and my object. The man stood by merely. The Irishman now told me I might have the "fwatch," and let him go on. I took it and at once saw it was the watch stolen. I told him this and that he must accompany me to Stafford to account for its possession.

He wished to do so then and, as he observed, save the waste of time and "throuble" in going to Stafford. In true Hibernian style he continued - "Faith", said he, "I'm no thief; but as I was coming on the fway, a gintleman (before you came up,) came to me and said, "fwhat's the clock," and I took out my fwatc to tell him. The gintleman said, "Fwill you change fwatches". I said, "No, no." The gintleman snatched my fwatc from me and said, "take this," giving me his fwatc in place of mine, that is the thruth." Still thinking it desirable to coax him on quietly I told him if that was the case he had only to explain the matter and it would be all right. By this means I induced prisoner to go quietly, he however several times on the way asked if he would be "let go" on explaining and, to calm his fears, I told him I thought so. We had now arrived at the cottage and I there exchanged the countryman's coat and straw hat for my uniform clothing.

This seemed to surprise and overawe him and he then became very resigned and docile. Before that change of apparel I believe he thought me to be a countryman, only trying merely to deceive him.

We got to Stafford without further difficulty. On arriving at the Police Station the Superintendent was agreeably surprised on seeing the stolen watch and prisoner and when informed I had traced and arrested him near Chartley, expressed satisfaction observing, "You've earned the sovereign well." That, however, I never received, the owner being a poor labourer, was never asked for it. I was quite satisfied with the expression of his thanks and acknowledgments.

In due course prisoner was taken before a County Justice and committed for trial at Quarter Sessions. In the interval, before trial, the gaol officers had got him identified as a person who had been previously convicted of felony. In his defence prisoner (in tears) told the jury the same extraordinary story as related on his arrest, finishing with a sort of complaint against myself, telling them how he was accosted and ill-treated by the man in the old straw hat and old coat and that he did not know him to be a "poll-eese," or he would not have denied having a "fwatch."

This only provoked some merriment in Court, the Jury of course disbelieving it, found him guilty. He was sentenced to seven years' transportation.

Thank you to the William Salt Library, Stafford for permission to use the above extract and to Mrs. Jenny Bell of Salt who drew the story to my attention in the first instance.

I wonder if anyone will be reading this book in a hundred years' time?

ACCIDENTS AT A518/A51 JUNCTION

On Thursday November 21, 1991 at 4.15 a.m. a male passenger suffered a fatal injury.

The 19 year old male driver and a 21 year old male passenger suffered serious injuries. No other vehicle was involved. The car had been travelling along the A518, crossed the junction with the A51 and ended up next to the main railway line.

On Saturday March 14, 1992 at 4.38 p.m. a 73 year old female passenger aged suffered a fatal injury when the car she was travelling in was in collision with another car.

On Monday June 15, 1998 at 7.45 a.m. a female driver suffered a serious injury when her car was in collision with a 1.5 ton goods vehicle on the Weston side of the junction.

On Tuesday July 7, 1998 at 12.25 p.m. an 82 year old female driver suffered a fatal injury when her car collided with a second car.

On Friday August 27, 1999 at 10.40 a.m. a 62 year old female driver suffered a fatal injury when her car collided with a second car.

On Monday November 1, 1999 at 12.40 a.m. a male driver aged 25 a male passenger aged 27 and a male passenger aged 19 suffered serious injuries. Two male passengers aged 23 and 27 suffered slight injuries. No other vehicle was involved.

On Sunday January 9, 2000 at 3.35 p.m. a 69 year old female driver suffered a serious injury when her car was in collision with another car.

On Friday February 18, 2000 at 9.45 a.m. a male driver aged 70 suffered a serious injury when his car was in collision with a HGV.

THE END OF OUR JOURNEY

We've now reached the junction of the A518 and the A51 and the end of our journey in this book. On our next journey we'll cross the busy A51 and the West Coast Railway Line, pass through Weston and on across the Trent and Mersey Canal and the River Trent on our final journey into Stafford five miles away.

Part 3 of The Road to Chartley is already underway. The book will cover the A518 from Weston to the end of the A518 as it enters Stafford at Pennycroft. If you have stories, information, photos on any of the following please get in touch with me: Weston Dairy, Weston Hall and in particular its ghosts, the old Pump House near Weston Hall, the village of Salt and the nearby hamlet of Tinkerborough, - did you know anyone who lived there? - Hopton Heath, the old Clog and Knocker Railway Line, photos of the Black Bridge and old railway bridge near the RAF houses at Hopton, the old Stafford Asylum, The Gate Public House or any bits of local history to do with the Stafford Uttoxeter Road I would also be interested in borrowing any press cuttings, maps, written records, ephemera or memorabilia relating to any of the above.

You can contact me at Walton Youth & Community Education Centre,

Walton High School,
Walton on the Hill,
Stafford ST17 0LJ.

01785 - 356351

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I would like to thank all those who have helped with the publication of this book.

First of all, I would like to thank all those who contributed their stories. I apologise to those people who have had to wait a long time for this book to be published. Originally there was going to be one book covering the whole road but the stories and anecdotes kept coming in and this created the need for three separate books.

I would like to thank all those people who helped with information and provided new contacts and those who provided photos, postcards, press cuttings and ephemera relating to the stories in this book.

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If by any unfortunate chance I have missed anyone out I would ask them to please accept my profound apologies.